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OLIVE BLAKE'S GOOD WORK.

A Novel.

BY

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“ISABEL,” “A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS,” &c.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.

1864.

ALUMNUS

OLIVE BLAKE'S GOOD WORK.

BOOK I.

DREAMLAND:—BEING PART THE FIRST OF MISS TABITHA TREE'S NOTE-BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

DECLARATIONS.

WE lived at Farnham Cobb—I, and my grandfather, and Mrs. Skettle, and sister Ety, and about two hundred and fifty neighbors of various degrees of social humility.

Farnham Cobb is in "the corn country." It is as well that the reader should bear this in mind, as to do so may prevent confusion. Six miles on the southeast of Farnham Cobb "the light lands" begin, with their vast fields of sand and their interminable sweeps of sheep-walk; and beyond "the light lands" is the sea, the wild wide sea, creaming the shingle, and lashing the white headlands of the coast; but Farnham Cobb lies in the richest vein of "the corn country."

My story begins at a date somewhere about thirty or forty years since; but all the same for that, its opening scenes are in the "good old times;" for Farnham Cobb, when I lived in it, was remote from the bustle of modern England. The corn country was more than a hundred and thirty miles from London. It had not even heard of the iron roads and locomotives of Northumbria; and its grand turnpike road, at the nearest point to us, did not come within twelve miles of my grandfather's gate.

So let it be understood that we are in "the good old time." The sleepy, the sunny, the peaceful, the "rich old time"—full of abuses which it was too happy to fret about, full of wickedness that it was too ignorant—and, pardon the paradox, too innocent—to be shocked at, full of tyranny that it was too contented to groan under. Yeomen were still content to be yeomen, and lived in the same ample kitchens with their farm-servants. Young, pale-faced curates had not learned to slip about the hedgerows with hands crossed over their breasts. Indeed, there was scarce a curate within twenty miles of Farnham Cobb. In those days every benefice had its priest, and almost every priest had his benefice. Neither in cloth nor in corn had competition come into fashion. The stocks and the whipping-post stood side by side in the crossing of the village ways, but they had not been used within the memory of man. The stocks and the whipping-post were chopped up for fire-wood ten years since. I wonder who took the trouble to demolish them. Doubtless those whose interest it was to make away with such instruments of penal correction.

I awoke betimes on the morning at which this history commences. The tall, antique clock in the hall had not struck five when I was down stairs and high busy in the inquest-room. For it was the grand day of the year with us. It was "Declarations," and I knew that at ten o'clock A.M. I should have to present my class for examination in the inquest-room.

Farnham Cobb College, of which my grandfather was Gerent, and I, Tabitha Tree, *etat* twenty-two, was Vice-gerent, had its "Declarations" on the last Thursday of August in each year. And "Declarations" caused me, and Mrs. Skettle, and Ety no little trouble. Buns and ale had to be provided for all the parishioners who chose to present themselves at the ceremony; and these cakes and ale invariably attracted at least fifty of our poorer neighbors—that is to say, all the women of the village who could quit their cottages or gleaning, and all the men who could slip away from their work. A cold collation of bread and meat had also to be set before the twelve members of my class, and the inquest-room had to be "put to rights."

This last task was no trifling one; for on all the days of the year save the last Thursday in August the inquest-room was devoted to uses very different from that of "Declarations." We kept our stores of apples and potatoes in it. We kept our gardening tools, and garden seeds, and stuff in it. Sometimes we stowed away a load of fagots in it. It may therefore be easily imagined what labor it was to me to get the apartment in order.

On the present occasion, however, I, with the help of old Isaac Stoddart, removed the lumber, swept out the room, dusted the desks, and knocked some of the blackest cobwebs from the windows with unusual celerity. At breakfast I was able to assure my dear grandfather that all was ready.

"The College" stands three hundred yards from the nearest habitation, on the summit of a steep hill. The rough by-road that runs below the wall of College garden is the principal way from Loughton, in the heart of the corn country, to Orford, on the coast; but not five carriages of any sort are dragged up it per day, and of the few travelers who make the ascent not one in ten gets a glimpse of the College; for the old house, with its red-brick basement and plaster walls topped with gables, is hidden by the boughs of many elms and walnut-trees. At the foot of the hill lies in slovenly tranquillity the village

of Farnham Cobb, with its church, of which my grandfather was vicar.

The antique clock in the hall struck ten. The tenth stroke had not ceased to vibrate when my grandfather appeared at the chief entrance of "the College," arrayed in his full canonicals. A picture of a village pastor he was. Imagine him, venerable with threescore and fourteen years, erect to the full height of six feet, with the placid dignity of benevolence and gentle nurture on his handsome face—his long legs clothed in breeches, black silk stockings, shoes and buckles; his silk gown caught up by a merry breeze bent on displaying his portly figure, covered not with a cassock, but with a capacious waistcoat, from the open front of which came the snowy whiteness of a deep linen frill; his head uncovered, its white locks being drawn back into a tail! Such was my grandfather to look upon—the Reverend Solomon Easy. As he descended the steps from the hall door and crossed the grass-plot on his way to the inquest-room the assembled parishioners declared their parson was "a figure of a man."

In another minute the vicar sat on his official seat in the inquest-room, in the character of Gerent of Farnham Cobb College.

When he entered I sat with beating heart at the lower desk in the room, at the head of my class, consisting of twelve lads from the village of ages varying between six and sixteen. The Gerent was followed into the place of assembly by the villagers who had come up for the spectacle of the inquest. The clatter of their feet was subsiding as they found places on the benches arranged for their accommodation, when Mrs. Skettle made her appearance, followed by Etty. Etty was then almost sixteen years old, and at the apparition of her lovely face, and golden hair, and delicate form a buzz of admiration rose from the rustic assembly.

Glancing timidly around her, Etty glided through the room to the grandfather's desk, and took her station at his elbow, just as he raised in his hand a huge birch rod, that, like the ceilings and windows of the inquest-room, was covered with cobwebs. It is needless to say that this mockery of scholastic terrors was used only as an emblem of authority, not as an instrument of torture.

"Declarasne?" cried my grandfather, sternly, bringing down the mouldy twigs with a crash on his desk.

"Declaro," I answered audibly, but with my heart jumping to the top of my throat.

"Declarasne?" repeated my grandfather again, with increased severity of intonation.

"Declaro, domine," I responded.

"Veni" was the rejoinder, made in a milder voice, the Gerent at the same time laying down his rod, as if he relinquished an intention to use it.

At this signal I rose from my seat and marched up the middle of the room, between the spectators occupying the two sets of benches, and presenting myself before my grandfather made a humble reverence. Etty had something very like a laugh on her merry pink lips, and the folds of her light muslin dress were agitated, as if she had a hard struggle to compress her sense of amusement, and keep it within the limits of her own consciousness; but I was very nervous. My grandfather's desk and chair were on a raised dais, and resembled in every respect

the old-fashioned pedagogic throne of a provincial grammar-school; and as he looked at me over the rail that ran along the front of the official table, and then peered at me through the little balustrades that supported the rail, my knees trembled beneath me. It was all very fine for Etty to laugh. She had no responsibility on her inexperienced shoulders. But as for me, what if my hob-nailed pupils broke down under the searching scrutiny into their knowledge on matters theological and secular, to which the Gerent of the College was about to submit them? So nervous and apprehensive was I of calamity that I half made an internal resolve, in case I came well out of the next hour's ordeal, I would ever afterward give my class two hours' instruction on the evening of one "week day" in each week, in addition to the two hours of Sunday tuition to which my labors, as Vice-gerent of "the College," had hitherto been confined.

"It's ten minutes past ten o'clock," said my grandfather, solemnly, taking his huge gold time-piece from his waistcoat pocket and laying it out on the desk before him. "Let us proceed to business. Now, senior respondent, what's your name?"

"Bill Stackhouse," roared out the senior respondent, loudly endeavoring to make himself heard, but through excess of zeal and the inconvenience of a cracked voice causing the roof of the inquest-room to vibrate from the sound.

"'William' would on the present occasion be more suitable than 'Bill,'" observed my grandfather, solemnly.

"Plaze, yer riv'rence," roared out the senior respondent—louder than ever, "that's a jest what Miss Tree is allus a tellin' on me. But, yer riv'rence, I can't help it, an' it's not my fault in the lessest; fur I'm allus called 'Bill,' and my remembrances allus were a short one."

"Well, William, well, well," replied my grandfather, encouragingly, "you must take pains. A weak memory can be strengthened by practice. Exercise it, William—exercise it. There's nothing like exercise for overcoming weakness."

"Ah, yer riv'rence, you've jest got the right on it there. That's jest what I a found out with my wind; fur though I ha' got a short remembrances I ha' got a precious good wind. I be the longest-winded boy i' the whole parish. Jest give me a long run, with a few hardles and a dike ivery hunder yods or so, and I'll run any boy my own size. There ain't a boy the whole country round dust wager me. There ain't a boy's wind the whole country round can touch my wind. That's jest the trewth on it, and the whole trewth on it. But when I fust begunned to run, why, stars alive, yer riv'rence, nowthing more nor a hop skip and a jump would blow me wholly and out right. And that's jest a fact and the trewth, yer riv'rence."

I thought that boy William Stackhouse would never have come to an end. It was exactly like him. As intelligent and good a lad as ever breathed on all other questions, he was impudent and loquacious almost to insanity on the subject of his "wind;" and here, positively, when he ought to have been saying who gave him his name of William, and what his godfathers and godmothers thence for him, he was taking up the time of the whole College and all the spec-

tators with roaring out this rubbish about the length of "his wind." I longed to set him down. I longed to tell him that he ought to know his place better than to speak in that way about "his wind" in the presence of his elders, and at "Declarations" of all imaginable occasions. My tongue tingled to inform him that I knew several boys more long-winded than he was. But who was I? I had no right to speak. I was only Vice-gerent; and the Gerent, far from calling the garrulous lout to order, only listened to him courteously, and smiled with every appearance of satisfaction.

I was crimson with vexation. I knew that every one present, save my grandfather, thought the boy had gone mad. I knew, though I dared not for the life of me look at her, that Etty had turned away from the company, and was staring fixedly at the wall, in the hope of concealing the risible emotions she could no longer control. But what could I do? I had not made the boy's "wind." It was no fault of mine that it was a long one. It was no fault of mine that he would talk about it.

Luckily the rest of the ceremony went off well. All the boys knew their "pieces" of the Catechism, of "Martyr History," and of the multiplication-table, and the tables of weights and measures. More than a few times, indeed, the Gerent put the wrong questions to the wrong boys, and thereby elicited, among other equally remarkable assertions, the somewhat striking statements that three barley-corns went to a firkin of butter, and that Pontius Pilate was burned in Smithfield by Queen Mary; but these mistakes were my grandfather's, and not the boys'. He ought to have put the right questions, and then he would have had in return the right answers. Luckily, however, the absurdity of the replies never disturbed my dear grandfather's equanimity. He either did not heed them, or did not care to show that he heeded them. So all went comfortably.

"It's ten minutes past eleven!" at length exclaimed the Gerent. "The hour required by the Statutes is finished."

Then the Gerent rose and addressed me in a Latin speech, of the meaning of which I had not the faintest glimmering, save when there occurred in it the words *dominus* and *declaro*, *declorans* and *declarationes*, and other variations of *declaro*. The speech at an end, the Gerent called up the senior respondent, and presented him with a five-shilling piece, as an emolument due to his dignity as Captain of the College. It was all my doing that William Stackhouse had figured as senior respondent. Had I so willed it, little Bob Pratt, with the curly hair and brown eyes, might have had the part and the premium. But a sense of justice had induced me to prefer that big lubberly Stackhouse to my pet pupil. And then the boy had behaved as he had behaved. It was very vexing.

It was, however, no time to think of my vexation. There was plenty else for me to be busy about. My grandfather declared "Declarations" at an end, and that the inquest-room would forthwith be closed for another year. Then the company adjourned to the grass-plot in front of "the College," and were entertained with harvest-buns and harvest-ale. The boys of my class had a regular dinner set out for them on a table

under the biggest walnut-tree, and the senior respondent carved. It was a pleasant sight; the village women clacking and feasting under the shadow of the elms, and Mrs. Skettle quietly going on with her knitting as she sat on one of the College steps; Etty springing to and fro, light as a young fawn and merry as music; and my grandfather, still habited in his splendid canonicals, stockings, shoes, and buckles, moving about among his guests, doing the honors of hospitality to them as if they had been the first persons in the county.

"Miss Tree," said the senior respondent to me, penitentially, as he was about to depart, "I du hopee, Miss Tree, as how you'll see fit to take my 'xuses and granit me yer pardin. For yer see, I couldner help it, that I couldner. In most things I am a responsible lad and comfortable, and do my duty in that station as has been seen fit; but when I hear any motter as fare to touch on my wind, I must hev my sai. Yer know, Miss Tree—dontee? Yer see, Miss Tree, I ha'n't got many gifts to put me above my neighbors, but I have got a long wind, and you know, Miss—dontee? So I du hopee you'll pardin."

When William Stackhouse tried to be seductive he always gave this pronunciation to "hope."

"Well, William," I answered, avoiding the whole question of wind, "what are you going to do with the five-shilling piece? have you made up your mind?"

"Oh, Miss Tree," the awkward lad answered, a glow of triumph suffusing his big lumpy features, "I am right glod—that I am—fur the crown; fur mother was sai-ing, only yesserday wor six weeks, that the highmost top o' har wish wor to fit out little Tommy in a new set o' things. And fur a new set o' things mother shall have the crown. That she shall, Miss; and I'll shake hands on what I now sai wi' any man."

I was delighted with the awkward earnestness of my senior respondent.

"Will Stackhouse," I said, warmly, laying my right hand sharply on the shoulder-piece of his fustian jacket, "you're the longest-winded boy in the whole country. And if any body says you are not, tell him that Miss Tree says you are."

The senior respondent pulled his forehead in token of respect to me, and took his departure. By four o'clock our numerous band of visitors had sauntered down the hill into the village, or hurried off to the gleaming fields; and the Vicar and I, and Mrs. Skettle and Etty, were left by ourselves in the College garden.

CHAPTER II.

AN EVENING IN AUGUST.

By six o'clock, our customary hour for taking tea, the Rev. Solomon Easy had put aside his canonicals and his silver buckles, and was taking his ease in a long, loose, gray coat and slippers, the knee-strings of his breeches being untied and pendent. But even in this negligent costume he looked well-dressed and fit for a drawing-room. It was a characteristic of a divine of "the old school," that he always had the air of being well-dressed.

"The College," as our old house was called,

consisted of an enormous and lofty hall, paved with square slabs of black and white marble, a quaint old oak staircase extending from the hall to the very top of the house, several large and draughty passages and corridors, a dozen quaint little old-fashioned rooms, altogether out of proportion with the great hall and huge staircase and capacious passages; and a multitude of attics, closets, and dark dens, into which we none of us ever cared to look. Of the kitchens and dairy I need not here speak. The windows were laced with vine-branches, the porch was covered with roses, wild and cultivated; and the exterior of the sturdy brick tower, which did us service as chimney, was hidden in ivy. In the summer months, while the warmth permitted us to inhabit so airy an apartment, we used to make the hall our living-room; but in the colder seasons we retreated to one or another of the small pigeon-hole rooms that opened into the hall.

Of these rooms the most admired was "the tea-room," in which (whatever might be the temperature) we always took tea the whole year round. Even in July and August, when we were glad to sit on the cool chess-board floor of the marble hall, we were wont to adjourn to the tea-room every evening at six o'clock. A faded and ill-furnished little room it was, but my dear grandfather liked it. It contained my mother's portrait, was redolent of dried rose-leaves, and possessed a piano, made a long generation before the great Mr. Broadwood was even thought of. My grandfather had a lively respect for this piano, believing it to be in perfect tune, and the prime of its existence, and invariably speaking of it as "the instrument."

My grandfather looked at his watch, saw that the time was ten minutes past six, rubbed his slippers uneasily against each other, and then glancing at me, who occupied the sofa of the tea-room, put his watch back without saying a word. Mrs. Skettle was counting the stitches of her knitting, and Etty was at the open window talking to her white mice.

Ten minutes more passed on.

"My dear Tibby," said my grandfather at length, with an air of reluctance, "he won't come to-night."

"Who won't come?" I answered, pretending that Julian Gower was not in my thoughts.

"Julian Gower," replied my grandfather.

"It's too late now. So let's have tea."

"Oh, of course, Julian won't join us to-night. It's his uncle's birthday, and of course he can't get away; though he certainly did promise to join us."

"I am sorry Jule won't come," put in Etty, leaving the window and depositing her mice on the table, "for I want to speak to him."

"Oh, lady-bird," rejoined my grandfather, with a laugh, "you like Jule, do you? You can't be happy without him."

"Happy without him? Bless you, grandad, I don't want him to make me happy; for I have got my white mice, and when I'm tired of them I've got you, to play with. And Jule doesn't come to see me. He is Tibby's friend. Oh, you should hear, my dear Mr. Easy, how they do talk together all about the earth's formation, and a lot of other long things."

My grandfather laughed lightly. His laughter was never loud. As for me, a flush came to

my face as I glanced at Etty; but the artless expression of her countenance reassured me that she had only hit me with a random shot.

"I'm just nobody, you know, Sir," the child ran on, with the dashing pertness her grandfather was never tired of listening to. "I'm a little nursery chit, allowed to live down stairs with my elders, because Tibby has not got a nursery to put me in. Here I am. Look at me—short white frock and sash, long trowsers with big frills round the ankles, pink slippers, coral necklace, lots of curls. Only a child, that's all. What should she know about Jule, and the earth's formation, and safety lamps, and explosions? There, Tibby, don't keep looking at me just as if my French exercise was all mistakes, or my sums wouldn't add up, or I had said that Cromwell killed Charles the Second. I am going to rout you all up to-night, and go mad."

Whenever Etty took it into her head to "go mad," as she termed it, my grandfather had a rich feast of fun. So at the threat he now brightened up, and said, "That's it, Etty, go mad."

"Not till after tea, Mr. Easy; I must have my tea in peace and quietness, with lots of bread and new honey, and then I'll go mad with a vengeance."

My grandfather did not care much for tea, though he took it systematically in large cups every morning, and little round cups without handles every night, out of respect to the ladies of his establishment, for whom he regarded the Chinese beverage as especially suited. His favorite drink was mild home-brew, with the variation on festive occasions of a few glasses of Madeira, or that fine old wine—port, which I hear is going out of fashion, and will in the course of another generation be obsolete. "Give me a bottle of port," I have often heard him say, "when I have a friend with me; and give me two glasses of Madeira when I am alone. You young ladies must remain faithful to your tea-pot. You have your complexions to think about."

Acting on this principle, as soon as I and Mrs. Skettle had had our tea, and Etty had devoured in addition to her cups of the hot fragrance two prodigious rounds of bread and honey, my grandfather led the way back into the hall, and taking a decanter of Madeira from the side-board sat down at the great table to enjoy himself.

"Ah, my dears," he said, with a sigh, pouring out glass No. 1, "time was when 'Declarations' were merry days. Poor Dr. Sayers and poor Harry Cotton used always to come in for a glass of port and a rubber. But they are both gone. God preserve them! What fine fellows of the 'old school' they were! I have never touched a card since poor Harry followed the Doctor. No, I am wrong. I played one evening at the Loughton club with the young man who has succeeded to Sayers's practice. But it wouldn't do, my dears. The young man would persist in talking about the rules of the game. When I was a young man I never presumed to talk about the rules of the game; it was quite enough for me to observe them. I was glad at knowing that he was all wrong, and did not understand even the A B C of what he professed to be so familiar with. Of course I did not dispute with him. I held my tongue and thought

how that sort of thing would have been tolerated fifty years since. I hope it was not evil in me to feel a satisfaction at the young man's blunders—and then Mr. What's-his-name (I forget what the young man is called) had an atrocious habit of smacking down his winning trumps on the table, as if forsooth the strength lay in himself and not in the cards; and then he swept up the cards of each trick as if forsooth he was a mighty smart fellow for sweeping up the cards like so many marbles; and whenever he won with the fourth card, of course he put down his card and took up his trick so that no one could see what the winning card was; and if he could not see through the finesse of his partner's play, sure as the deal came about he would ask, 'Why did you refuse my so-and-so?' or, 'Why did you trump my so-and-so?' or, 'Don't you think you ought to have led through the so-and-so?' Ah, my dears, he was a terrible young man! You may rely on me, whist is a game that will never be really played again in this country. You'll of course have men sit down at tables in parties of four, and deal out cards, and win money, and lose temper, and ask questions, and think all the time that they are playing whist, but whist it won't be. Let the 'old school' once die out, and gentlemanly *high-minded* whist will be an extinct game. No, no, I'll never touch a card again, but be content for the rest of my days to play backgammon with Etty."

"I have beaten you I don't know how many gammons and you never pay one," popped in Etty, alluding to a certain accumulation of sixpences, which she maintained her grandpapa owed her.

"Then come here, Miss Saucy, and be paid in kisses," cried the debtor, putting down his empty glass, and after dragging Etty to his lap proceeding to kiss her.

"Oh, yer riv'ence," cried Etty, imitating the village people, as soon as she had struggled from the arms of her captor, "before you kiss a pretty girl like me you should shave yourself. You are so rough—oh, so disgracefully rough!"

"Then scratch the beauty out of your face, my doll, if you don't like my wooing," cried his reverence, proudly, filling up glass No. 2 as he looked at his lovely grandchild; "for," he added, singing a stanza of an old song:

"Whilst Kitty's eyes are soft and blue,
To Kitty I'll be servant true.
Whilst Kitty's lips are fresh as May,
And fair her cheek and tender,
I vow I'll nothing have to say
To others of her gender.
But should her beauty take to flight—
A fig for honor's jargon!—
To love her eyes without their light
Is no part of my bargain.
It is but law I do uphold,
Love's law as taught by Benjamin Bold."

The execrable sentiments of Mr. Benjamin Bold had so very ludicrous an effect, coming from the lips of our reverend and excellent grandfather, that Etty and I burst out laughing, and even Mrs. Skettle seemed inclined to cry *encore*.

"Ah, my children," said my grandfather, putting down glass No. 2, and modulating his voice to a tone of pathetic reminiscence, "the first time I heard that song sung poor Jack Hargreaves was the singer. What a noble fellow Jack was! His ship was lying off the White Foreland—his Majesty's ship *The Infernal*, as

fine a man-of-war as ever peppered a Frenchman—and Jack entertained all the *élite* of the neighborhood with a ball on board. Lady Caroline Glint was there—do you happen ever to have met Lady Caroline, my dear Tibby?"

"No, oh dear, no, grandpapa," I answered, respectfully.

"Why, how should she ever have met Lady Caroline Glint?" popped in Etty, with her customary confidence. "Lady Caroline Glint died when you were a young man, and Tibby is only six years older than I am. How can you talk such nonsense?"

"Ah," returned my grandfather, mildly, folding his white hands slowly over each other, "is it so indeed? How quickly time flies! How very quickly!"

A minute's silence.

The pause broken by Etty striking in with—

"Now, Mr. Easy, Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jump over the candlestick! No waiting to consider—answer me—what's Declarations?"

"An inquest, to be sure, you little simpleton."

"And what's an inquest?"

"An examination."

"Well, but who set Declarations going? How did they come about? What's the good of taking the potatoes and kindling out of the inquest-room once a year just to hear twelve boys say their catechism and tables, when you might just as well have them up here into the hall?"

"The statutes—the rules of the College—require that the examination should take place in the inquest-room."

"Who made the rules?"

"They were settled at the foundation."

"Who made the foundation?"

"Why," replied the grandfather, raising his voice in consternation at this torrent of interrogatories, "the founder, to be sure."

"And who was the founder?"

"The pious and venerable Lady Arabella Howard, who, dying at the age of ninety-three, bequeathed her large landed estates to trustees for the support and instruction of the poor of this vicinity."

"Oh! then the founder was an old woman?"

"Yes, an old woman."

"Well, now!" exclaimed Etty, coming to a triumphant conclusion, "that's exactly what I supposed before I began to ask my questions."

We were all convulsed with laughter.

"There!" cried Etty; "now I have 'gone mad' with a vengeance, haven't I? Go on laughing, Mr. Easy, for two minutes longer, and then I'll be down stairs once more, and have a hit at backgammon with you."

As she said these last words she skipped lightly up the oak staircase.

My grandfather's laughter ceased as soon as he had lost sight of the child's white petticoats from the dark gallery; and moving his head, so that his lips were close to my ear, he said, in a confidential tone, not much above a whisper, "My dear Tibby, your little sister, when she grows up, will be a very remarkable woman—a Mrs. Chapone, or a Miss Porter. Of course she won't write a book. She won't disgrace the family by doing any thing that does not become the delicacy of woman. But she will be a very remarkable woman—she'll be heard of."

I left my grandfather and Etty at the backgammon-board, having first lighted candles for their accommodation. That housewifely duty done, I went out into the garden for a quiet stroll in the beech avenue, from the end of which I could watch the setting sun, and survey the valley sinking to rest.

Solitude, however, was not permitted me.

"My dear," said Mrs. Skettle behind me.

Mrs. Skettle so seldom spoke that I turned round with additional surprise—surprise at being addressed by any one, and surprise at being addressed by her.

At the time of these occurrences I took life as it came, without inquiring why it came in one way rather than another. It had never occurred to me to make investigations into my own self-consciousness, and bother myself with trying to find out why "I" was "I." Still less had I ever cared to ask why Mrs. "Skettle" was Mrs. "Skettle." Enough for me that she was in the house, ready to do a great deal of odd work in a very unobtrusive manner, and to say a very little indeed in a manner and under circumstances calculated to make that little eminently impressive. We all are too apt to miss seeing the marvels of life by neglecting to examine the ground at our feet. So it was with Mrs. Skettle and my knowledge of her. Although I broke daily bread with her, I knew very little of her, for the simple reason that I was too self-absorbed to be curious about an old lady with a bronze face, unattractive features, green-glass spectacles, and dusty raiment.

She was somehow or other a friend of the family. She had nursed my mother in her dying illness, when I was only seven years old, and Etty was a babe in arms. She hardly ever opened her lips to speak. She was one of the permanent inmates of "the College." She took the house-linen and the crockery under her especial supervision. She liked assisting me in the large kitchen and dairy, where it was my daily use to work for the creature wants of "the College." She expected to be asked, out of courtesy, her opinion on the arrangements for each day's dinner; and out of courtesy she always declined giving a decided opinion. She every day dusted the whole of the house from top to bottom, but always took great pains that no eye should see her. Her mode of achieving this object was singular. Whenever she was disturbed in her dusting operations—on staircase or gallery, chamber or tea-room, or hall—she sat down, slipped her duster in her pocket as though it were a handkerchief, took out her knitting, and played away with her pins till the intruder had passed away. In consequence of this habit of hers, I have caught her knitting in some most extraordinary places—on the top of high wardrobes, and in the middle of passages, where she had only the boards or bricks to sit upon. The explanation of this most eccentric and rather objectionable line of conduct was this: She had been so habituated to housework in early life that she could not be comfortable without it. She therefore indulged her menial propensities, taking, however, all possible precaution they should not bring discredit on "the College," which she had some vague notion would suffer disgrace if she dusted furniture otherwise than furtively.

Thus much I know of Mrs. Skettle. But it was not till some few years since, when I was collecting certain minute particulars for my notebook, that I learned she was my grandmother's distant cousin; that in a remote village of "the corn country" she had exercised the imperfectly dishonorable vocation of a stay-maker; that, failing to gain a livelihood as a manufacturer of *corsettes*, she had officiated in the hundred of Nutting as a monthly nurse. Fine-hearted but mistaken old body! she accepted gratefully the shelter my dear grandfather afforded her, *on condition* that he kept her history and relationship unknown to me and my sister. On no other condition would she consent to take board and bed in "the College." My grandfather, as I had the good fortune to learn, endeavored to argue her out of her resolution, but could not succeed. No, she would not consent that I and Etty should be annoyed by learning that she was an old nurse and stay-maker, and yet, for all that, a relation. "No, Mr. Easy," she said, definitively, "let me have my way, or I'll go out into the world and officiate for myself. The girls shan't know I'm their kin. I won't darken their light."

"Your grandpa is quite right, my dear," observed Mrs. Skettle, unconscious of my surprise, and revealing without prelude the subject of her thoughts. "Etty is a wonderful child—and she'll rise in life. That she will."

"Do you really think so, Mrs. Skettle?" I rejoined.

"Think it, my dear?" replied Mrs. Skettle, in a confidential and thready, but far from unpleasant voice. "Think it, my dear? I *know* it. And if I didn't know it, your grandpa does, which is much better. Mr. Easy is the best blood in these parts, and he is a very learned graduate as well as a divine, and therefore whatever he *says* he *knows* must of course come true. She'll rise, no doubt o' that. And when she do rise, and I'm lying in my grave with only a small head-stone at the top of me, as is becoming in a lone woman of a decent stock, why she'll have in some small way and degree to thank me for that she has so risen."

"Thank *you*, Mrs. Skettle?" I inquired, repeating the old lady's words in surprise.

"Ay, my dear, I did for her from the first. You're now a grown woman, Miss Tree, and it won't disturb your eddication or put a blush upon your cheek to talk to you as a woman. I did it, my dear. I was by your blessed ma's side when Etty was born, and I did for the little darling from the very first. And it's just having a wise friend to look after your true interests when you are first born, my dear, that makes the difference whether you go up or go down. There was nothing left undone for Etty that mortal pains could do. A mackerel your poor dear ma longed for, and a mackerel I got her, though I had to send Mr. Easy's man full post off to Hythe to fetch it, and had to pay a crown-piece for it, in that mackerels were not then in season. True it was the fish come too late for your ma, for Etty was born or ever the man got back from Hythe. But said I, 'Do what Natur tells you is right;' and so we had the fish cooked, and we give just a morsel of it to Etty, babe though she was, and notwithstanding she had not been three hours born. Dr. Sayers objugated to my wish, and Mr. Easy half gave in to the doctor's objugation."

gations, but I had my way, holding on fast to the old Bible rule, "Do what Natur tells you is right."

Mrs. Skettle paused, but she speedily resumed the narrative of her grounds for exaltation.

"Then, my dear, long ere ever the poor child could be taken down stairs I took her up to the very top of 'the College;' and it isn't, Miss Tree, every child who has the chance of being born in such a high house as the College, which, counting ground-floor and watch-tower attic, has five rooms one atop of another. Mind me, my dear, if ever you have a baby, have her took up stairs afore ever you let it be carried a step down; for if you don't so mind, that babe—be it boy or be it girl—will never rise in life. Poor folks know this, and what the simple know surely the gentle ought not to be ignorant of. Bless you, there is not a poor woman the country round, whose child is born in a cottage-chamber, with no room nor loft above, but gives it a chance of rising by clambering with it in her arms on to the top of two chairs and a set of droles built up to make-believe a staircase. And a poor chance that is, compared with what one gets in a house like the College."

"And did no one take the same pains for me?" I asked, when Mrs. Skettle came to a pause. I put the question eagerly and despondingly; for though I did not believe in the superstition, I did not like that it should stand against my interests.

"Well, my dear, no one did, and that's a truth. I was not by when you were born, or you'd have been as well done by as Etty. But you were born in foreign parts—at Portsmouth, where your pa's regiment was; and your poor ma told me that you were cared for after the fashion of those parts; but there's no need for you to be disheartened, for it's more than likely that what holds good for these parts does not hold for those parts. But you ask the question, and the question I answer. You were not done by after my notions. You weren't *raised*—and you had the nails of your fingers cut before you were six months old. Now if Etty, seeing that she was born in these parts, had had her nails shortened with knife or scissors afore she was six months old, she'd have been light-fingered, lady though she be, and have the best blood of the country in her veins."

"You must remember mamma well, Mrs. Skettle?" I inquired, with the curiosity of filial affection, and an inclination to turn the conversation from my early misfortunes and Etty's superior advantages.

"Well! I should think I do remember her well! Poor gentle soul!" returned Mrs. Skettle, sighing. "She died in my arms. Surely you remember her?"

"I try, but I can't. You remember how young I was when she died—only seven years old. Sometimes I think I can recall her features; but then I go to her picture in the tea-room, and look at that, and it contradicts all my recollections. I almost wish we hadn't that portrait. Yet it seems wicked to say so."

"Well, my dear, I don't wish to speak against the pieter, for it cost five golden guineas, as Mr. Easy once told me, and it's handsome furnitur; but regarding it as a draught of your ma, a pepper-box is more like a flour-hutch than that take-off is like Annette Tree, born Easy."

"Was my father a good man, Mrs. Skettle?" I asked.

"He was a military man, my dear," answered Mrs. Skettle, avoiding the question.

"Tell me something about him."

"It isn't much I know about him, dear," the old lady answered. "I only saw him twice in all his days, and those two times were after dinner, when he, of course, couldn't talk much—bein' as he was of the military profession."

"Did he and mamma live together happily?"

"Oh yes, my dear," replied Mrs. Skettle, huskily; "why shouldn't they live happily together? I never heard any harm of him. He married for love, which I always think better of a man for. He drank deep, there's no doubt; but being of the military profession he was expected to drink deep; and he spent all your dear ma's fortune, and a good deal besides, but that, of course, though a cause of trouble, was excusable in a gentleman of the military profession. And he was killed in a duel—more shame on the man who shot him!"

Here were revelations. As Mrs. Skettle came to a close of the last sentence we were at the far end of the beech avenue. I did not care for the minute to ask any more questions, but sat down on a log chair, that was the extreme limit of the walk, and buried my face in my hands, recognizing to myself that Mrs. Skettle's concluding words had frightened me. I was soon calm and self-possessed again, and looked up to continue my interrogatories, but Mrs. Skettle was no longer by my side. She had left me as noiselessly and suddenly as she had come upon me.

I took two or three more turns in the avenue, and having stood still for five minutes looking at the quiet valley, just visible in the starlight, I retraced my steps down the blackness of the garden walk, and re-entered the College.

Etty had already gone to bed. Mrs. Skettle also had retired to rest; and my grandfather was alone in the hall smoking his pipe. He kissed me, and called me his "little ghost." He often called me by that name, but it had never on any previous occasion seemed, in my opinion, applicable to me.

"I declare, grandfather, I *feel* like a ghost," I answered.

"You look like one," he said; "you are whiter than ever. Where have you been?"

"In the garden, with Mrs. Skettle."

"Then you've been silent and moping, my little ghost."

"No. Mrs. Skettle has been very talkative."

"I did not know she ever talked," responded Mr. Easy, between the whiffs of his pipe.

I did not tell him what our conversation had been about; but lighting my candle, I bade him good-night, and went up the old oak staircase.

Etty's bedroom was next to mine, and opened into the same gallery. Before saying my prayers I crept into her room and watched her—fast asleep and surpassingly beautiful. She had dressed her hair for the night carelessly, and the golden tresses, unfastened by the movement of her head on the pillow ere she fell asleep, curled like a cloud round her face.

"Darling," I whispered, "I hope you'll rise in life!"

Then I went to my own room, and in due

course committed myself to sleep, my last moments of consciousness being divided between thoughts of Julian Gower and the sound of my grandfather's footsteps in the gallery as he proceeded to his bedroom.

No one had locked the College gates or bolted the College doors. In the "corn country" there was no need to secure a bolt or turn a lock.

CHAPTER III.

THE HARVEST FIELD.

THE next day I accompanied my grandfather to Sandhill. At Farnham Cobb early hours were in fashion; we breakfasted in the summer time at seven or eight o'clock at the latest, and often dined at twelve o'clock, though two o'clock was our more usual dinner hour. When it was arranged to have the principal repast of the day at twelve, Mr. Easy did not go beyond the limits of the College grounds between breakfast and dinner, but spent the morning in the garden, trimming the fences; or in the house, touching up an old sermon for the ensuing Sunday, or reading such ephemeral literature as the *County Paper*, or the last number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. It was thus he occupied himself during the fore-part of the day now recalled, and consequently he was full of vigor for the harvest field in the following afternoon.

The ingathering of autumn's wealth made a lively impression on my childish mind. As a little one I remember causing my nurse a laugh by exclaiming, "I know I was born in the autumn, for I remember being taken into the harvest field the day after I was born." The fact was, of all my early reminiscences, that of harvest-field enjoyment was the most powerful and enduring; it was a commencement, distinct and permanent, of consciousness, if not of life. Happy the children whose most lively recollections of dawning existence have no less agreeable associations than the warmth, the drowsy luxury, and tranquil cheerfulness of an English harvest!

"Soho, soho, little horse!" exclaimed my grandfather, in a soothing and patronizing tone, as he took the reins from the hands of Isaac Stoddart, and swayed himself into the pony-gig.

There was no doubt about the horse in question being a little one, for the sturdy black Shetland, which constituted the whole of my grandfather's "College" stud, did not exceed eleven hands in height; and though it was ambitious of magnitude, it was powerless by any amount of eating and laziness to add much to its stature; I am, however, bound to say that its strenuous efforts in the direction of self-development made every month a perceptible addition to its girth. In strong contrast to our fat pony was the lean gig, which was the only carriage, besides a small tumbrel and a wheelbarrow, attached to "the College." It was the most shadowy, most scrambling, highest-wheeled, and most attenuated little gig that mortal ingenuity ever contrived. Every element of discomfort, inconvenience, and disability that a carriage could suffer under was present in that noisy, scrambling vehicle. The seat-back was very high, but it was so composed of long spokes, with a

complication of knobs and protuberances adorning their length, that it was impossible for a passenger to recline upon them without losing skin. The wheels were very high, and rattled like a pair of bird-scarers. The step, which served as a resting-place for the ascending passenger between the ground and the foot-board, was almost a yard from the earth's surface. The dash-board was only three inches and a half in altitude; and there was no box under the seat for the reception of parcels, so that when we conveyed a basket of farm-produce from Sandhill to "the College," we had to place it on the foot-board before us, to the sore distress of our legs. At this date I look back to that crazy old gig with unsealed eyes; but at the time of which I now write it appeared to me, as it did to Etty and my dear grandfather, a faultless piece of mechanism. Etty and I "took turns" in "having rides." We called a period of locomotion in the pony-gig a "ride," and not a "drive," and we regarded such period of locomotion as the prime of treats. So highly did we prize the pleasure of "a ride," we kept the most exact account of how many rides we respectively had, and were at great pains not to intrench on each other's proper share of the coveted enjoyment.

"Soho, little horse!" cried my grandfather, letting himself down in the seat of the gig, and almost burying me in the folds of his coat's skirt—"that'll do, Isaac: now, let go his head; be nimble, and run and open the gate."

To be nimble and to run poor Isaac Stoddart could not. He was our wooden-legged gardener; and the wooden leg which replaced his native one of flesh, removed by a surgeon's knife, obviated all attempts on his part at speed. Strangers used to find pleasure in watching Isaac trim the vines, for he had a foot specially fashioned out of wood in such a manner that it could be fixed securely to the spokes of our garden ladders. Of course Isaac's wooden leg greatly interfered with his usefulness, but he answered our purpose. "You see, Tibby," said my grandfather, "he couldn't do every one's work, so he must even do ours." On the same principle Isaac Stoddart's wife (comparatively incapacitated by dropsy, palsy, and asthma) was our cook; and Isaac Stoddart's daughter (whose right eye had been put out in early infancy by the point of a gimlet) was our house-maid. An applicant for a vacant place in my grandfather's "employ" always had a recommendation in any physical disqualification he might suffer under. All the country round it came to be understood that the daff, the paralytic, and the afflicted were my grandfather's appropriate servitors. And he encouraged this view of the case—not on the grounds of benevolence, but by reference to the fitness of things. "Some people," he would say, "want their work done quickly and well; now I don't see the good of having my work done either quickly or well. So long as it is done by the end of the year, what's the use of fretting as to how long it takes; and so long as it is done, what's the good of worrying about the particular way in which it is done? After all, your crops can but be 'got in,' and a trench of celery, whether it is trenched by a perfect and able-bodied man or by a wooden-legged man, is, after all, only a trench of celery, and nothing more and nothing less. No amount of dexterity can convert a

trench of celery into an apricot-tree. And as for expense!—Goodness gracious, Tibby, with the few people I have about me, it would not make the difference of ten guineas a year; and what are ten guineas compared with the enormous number of guineas I have spent in the whole course of my life? Guineas! ten guineas! what difference would the subtraction or the addition of ten guineas make to the prodigious quantity of money I have played ducks and drakes with, first and last?" So the incapables gathered round my grandfather; and on his patrimonial farm, Sandhill, where he employed eight laborers the whole year round, not one of the eight (Mr. Michael Clawline, the foreman, excepted) was a sound man. One of his staff had enlargement of the heart, a second had an attack of rheumatic fever every twelve months, a third had recently broken his ribs, a fourth was threatened with consumption.

Our way through the sunny lanes of the corn country to Sandhill, which was nearly six miles distant from the College, was diversified by few incidents; wagons lumbered along through the dust, between the high hedges and over the brooks (now almost dried up), bearing yellow straw and grain to prosperous homesteads; the chestnut teams, making little trouble of their toil, and with their bells tinkling at their head-gear and their collars, seeming to be ponderous fabricators of light and disorderly music rather than beasts of burden.

Once, and only once, in our course we encountered a traveler above the condition of the laborers. He was a square man, sitting in a square gig, and driving a square-set bay horse, whose shining coat was flecked with spots of foam.

"Ah, my dear Mr. Easy," cried the square man, with a sort of disjointed cordiality, "how are you? And Miss Easy? How are you? Lovely afternoon for a drive. You yeomen are making your fortunes this year, Mr. Easy—fine crops, high prices, and no rents."

He was very hearty in his manner; but I should have liked his manner better if it had not been cut up into such small square pieces. His sentences were so short, and were said in such a sharp and angular tone, that I felt their corners as I might feel a pebble in my shoe.

We responded appropriately to this greeting, and as soon as the square man was out of sight (his horse was a fast trotter), my grandfather, with an enthusiasm of kindness, began to praise the character of our friend. "A most worthy, and exemplary, and excellent man is our friend Gurley. If an honest man is God's noblest work, what must an honest solicitor be! And Gurley is an honest solicitor—the soul of honor, and a sound lawyer! My confidence in Gurley is unlimited, and he knows it—and the consequence is, he does every thing in the way of his profession to serve me. He is one of those men who appreciate considerate treatment. An excellent man! The exemplar of probity!"

I was glad to hear Mr. Gurley thus spoken of, for at that time it gave me great pleasure to think well of my fellow-creatures. When I lived in "the corn country," if I was told that any one was better than his neighbors I believed the statement implicitly, and rejoiced in the goodness to which my attention was direct-

ed. I have learned ere this to be less credulous, to distrust agreeable assurances, to suspect the world's judgment, and to search shrewdly for the foundations of the world's praise. I am wiser now, but I am not happier. Knowledge may be power, but it is not gladness of heart. I think I would gratefully give up all I have (save the love of those who love me), if I could only unlearn the meaning of sham, take man's words on trust, never again look out for falsehood, and be once more the simple little fool I was when I lived in the corn country!

How long my grandfather would have gone on praising Mr. Gurley I can not say, had he been left to himself; but a diversion to his thoughts came in the shape of half a dozen little children, who all united to open a gate through which we had to pass. "There's your money," cried my grandfather, throwing down a shower of coins, and turning his little horse from the by-lane into a "drift" that skirted a turnip field—"a half-penny for each of you. Divide it without quarreling, and don't spend it on horse-flesh." "Do you know, Tibby," my grandfather added, with a look of sly glee, when he had driven beyond the sound of the hallooing children, "Mr. Clawline calculates that that gate costs me £3 per annum! Is not that a risible conceit? The notion of a gate on my own property, which hasn't been mended, or tinkered, or touched by a craftsman for thirty years, costing me £3 per annum! It is such an uncommonly risible notion! And I have no doubt Mr. Clawline is quite correct in his calculations. Indeed it's just that which makes the notion so risible."

We were still enjoying this highly "risible conceit," and the little horse was tugging us slowly up the "drift," when Mr. Clawline emerged from behind the fence on our right hand, bearing two stone bottles of harvest beer, slung—by means of a leather strap, passed through the handles of the bottles—over his left shoulder.

"The arternewn tew yer, yer riv'rence," observed Mr. Clawline, touching his hat.

"Good-afternoon to you, Mr. Clawline," returned my grandfather, addressing his foreman with the extreme of politeness. My grandfather's urbanity couldn't have been greater if Mr. Clawline had been a deputy-lieutenant of the county. "I hope, Mr. Clawline, you feel yourself quite well this fine weather."

"Thank yer, yer riv'rence, I'm not without my health. And my surviv'er *jee*, Miss Tree; I trust the arternewn agree with *yer*."

Mr. Clawline had two ways of pronouncing the second personal pronoun of the plural number. When he was emphatic, he called it "yew," and when he took it easy, he called it "yer." He had also two distinct paces of enunciation—the fast and the slow; neither of which were at all agreeable to my ear. When he employed the quick, I wanted him to speak slower, and when he made use of the slow, I invariably wished that he would talk faster.

In appearance Mr. Clawline was not imposing. He was about the middle height, high-shouldered, thick-set, and more fleshy than the ordinary run of laboring men. His hair was red, and cropped close; and pendent from the holdest curve of his body (I mean that portion of Mr. Clawline which was covered by the lower

part of his long red waistcoat, only I can't find an unobjectionable name to convey my meaning) dangled a watch-chain, with a plain seal attached. I may here also, parenthetically, state that this same portion of Mr. Clawline immediately under the lower part of his long red waistcoat was (his station of life being considered) singularly large. If I add also that his visage was so freckled that the freckles in some favored spots seemed to lie on the top of each other, I shall have said enough of Mr. Clawline's physical peculiarities.

However hot the weather was, Mr. Clawline always wore thick leather gaiters, and a double-breasted velveteen coat. Even when he was at work with a rake, or a very light pitchfork, he never relaxed himself by throwing aside either of these component parts of his official costume. "Fur yer knoo, Miss Tree," he explained to me when I once suggested that he should not wear so heavy a coat in the broiling sun, "I am his riv'rence's foreman, an' it 'ud niver du if I woz tu strip tu my work. There is grades and grades all the world over. There's them as *may* strip tu their work, and there's them as *must* strip tu their work, and there's them as *marn't* strip tu their work. If I war to shoo along o' my men in shirt-sleeves and blew lindsey-woolsey calves, how 'ud my men knoo as I war a foreman, and not one o' theirselves. I wish I could strip myself, but I marn't in my poosition of 'sponsibility. When a man talks a poost of 'sponsibility, he enjies the sweets on it, and he dewn't shark the bitter."

The principal treatment to which Mr. Clawline subjected his o's was to make the full and broad *oo* into *oo*, and the soft *oo* into *ew*; but he had many variations on this simple and ingenious method.

"Where are the men, Mr. Clawline?" inquired my grandfather.

"Well, yer riv'rence, they're just finishing o' rippin' i' the Long Piece; an' when they've finished the ripping, I shall mewve 'em all off to Little Bell, an' maik a job o' the earthen."

"They've made haste, Mr. Clawline."

"I dewn't sai they hev'n't, yer riv'rence. They've been looked arter. It's wholly s'prizing what a difference it maikie, whether men are looked arter, or whether they arn't looked arter."

"Ah," said my grandfather, after lazily surveying the breadth of corn land lying before us, "it's a splendid harvest! I never remember a better harvest. All the years I have been a farmer I have never seen better crops. What say you, Mr. Clawline?"

During my grandfather's last sentence, which was enunciated very leisurely and after a pause, Mr. Clawline had taken some ears of wheat from his pocket and rubbed them together in his hands. He had now thrown away the stalks, and was winnowing the chaff from the grain by blowing into the hollow of his hands and shifting the corn from one palm to another. At last the delicate operation was brought to a conclusion, and then—but not till then—Mr. Clawline made response.

"What sai yew, Mr. Clawline? Look at these ear corns. That's what Michael Clawline sai. Ded yer riv'rence iver see better corns? I knoo yer riv'rence niver did see better corns. A harvest? I should think it war a harvest.

Wheats is good. Barleys is good. W'oats is good. Peas is *very* good. Beans is *uncommon* good. Roots show well. But times ain't what they war. Noo, yer riv'rence, times ain't what they war."

Between each of these short sentences Mr. Clawline opened his mouth wide and chucked what he termed "a corn" into it; and he did not proceed to another of his series of interjectional remarks until he had bitten "the corn" twice, and packed it away in his mouth without any manifest effort of deglutition.

It is to be observed that this plan of dealing with an observation was a strong point of Mr. Clawline's conversational system. He would first construct a very commonplace packet of words, and throw it on the ground, just as any ordinary agriculturist might do. But instead of passing on and leaving it to its fate, he would pick it up, and develop the secrets of its internal structure by pulling off its folds one after another just as you might peel an onion. With Mr. Clawline for an operator this was an interesting process. As he stripped off the skin of a sable epithet, and displayed a silver adjective under it, he smiled with a self-complacency that was very irritating to a nervous spectator, but was oil and wine to a beholder of a tranquil temperament. The man was so steeped in a sense of his own importance, and a consciousness that no other person could peel grammatical onions in the same masterly style! And there was forbearance in him too. He did not fling the husks of his sententiousness in your face, but allowed them to drop lazily to the ground, fluttered about by the wind, as matters of no importance.

"Never mind the times!" resumed his reverence, cheerfully. "I never had better crops."

"I niver had better crops," rejoined Mr. Clawline, doggedly.

"I never had finer wheat in the Long Piece," exclaimed my grandfather, with a rising color, and a rising voice, and a rising emphasis on the egotistic pronoun.

"I niver had finer wheats i' the Long Piece," rejoined Mr. Clawline, viciously.

"I! I! I! How many I's go to spell *you*? Can you answer me that, Mr. Clawline?" asked my dear grandfather, with an unmistakable flash of anger. "Who do you think, Sir, is the master of this farm? *Your* crops, indeed! Who's master here, you or I?"

"Now, yer riv'rence, how can yew go for to aix sech a kivistishun as that, with Miss Tree (my humble surviv to her) a setting i' the hobby-cart by your side? I master? Who's master? Well, I niver he'erd tell i' the like. But a kivistishun must be answered. Who's master? Why, surelie, yew're master. Yew're the Riv'rent Solomon Easy of Farnham-Cobb College, and owner o' Sandhill. That's what yew are. Now, who's I? I'll jest tell yer riv'rence what I am. I am yer riv'rence's right-hand man, and notawl the wigs at Sissions or 'Zizes can countersai but what I am yer right-hand man. If the wigs at the Sissions or 'Zizes war to aix what I air, I should sai 'I'm his riv'rence's right-hand man, and fur his riv'rence I'm oop airly and I'm down late, an' I eat the sweat o' carefulness.' That's jest as I should put it. 'Fur his riv'rence,' I should sai out o' the book, 'I eat the sweat o' carefulness.' And not a wig at the Sissions or 'Zizes

could countersai me. But to go for to aix me 'who I am?' is nothing but to crow over a poor man."

"Tush, tush, man," responded my grandfather, quite mollified toward his right-hand man, "you're a most faithful steward of my interests. I was wrong, Mr. Clawline, I was wrong. I meant to say 'we had never had better crops.'"

"Well, yer riv'rence, it's jest like *yew* to put it so," responded Mr. Clawline, concluding the controversy and pocketing his winnings.

My grandfather had filliped up the "little horse," and we were again progressing along the drift, when Mr. Clawline called after us,

"I har 'bout them ship."

"Them ship? what ship?" inquired my grandfather, pulling up.

"Them tw score o' South-Downs, as I tould yer riv'rence on. An' I got 'em sax-pins er hid under what yer counted."

"Ah," said my grandfather, taking all the merit of his right-hand man's bargain to himself, "I always get my stock a little under market-price. I'm a terrible near hand at a bargain."

"Ah, yer riv'rence is jest that," responded Mr. Clawline, with a scarcely visible grin.

"I am the nearest hand at a bargain in the whole county," added my grandfather, pursuing his course of exultation, and shaking his head as he reflected on what a close-fisted, wicked old dealer he was.

"The nearest hand at a bargain in the whole county!" repeated Mr. Clawline, with a subdned chuckle, and a mischievous light in his eye. "That's jest what yer riv'rence is—leastwise, when there ain't none but what's furdur off."

Having enunciated this enigmatical sentence, Mr. Clawline slowly raised himself to the top of a stile, and then slowly let himself down, and then slowly disappeared behind a high hedge, to make a short and easy route to the Long Piece.

The reaping was done in the Long Piece; and in half an hour's time I was sitting under a hedge, that warded off the rays of the falling sun, at the top of the inclosure called Little Bell. The creaking wagon had already taken the first load past me to the stack-yard. The scene was cheerful to look at, and the line of workmen in the amber sunlight moving the sheaves with a flock of gleaners in their rear had so picturesque an effect, and such a fresh southwest breeze played about the stubble, that as I sat in the shade I did not think of the toil, and heat, and dust endured by the actors in the panorama before me. I attributed to them the happiness I myself experienced. They seemed to me to be only amusing themselves.

I had my "tattooing" work in my hand. On one side of me on the bank lay my grandfather's coat, and gaiters, and three-cornered hat. (The buckles and silk stockings he only wore at "Declarations.") He was hard at it among the workmen, with his white shirt-sleeves and stockings conspicuously contrasting with his dark raiment. As he was not foreman he could "strip tew his wark." On my other side was a basket containing a bottle of cider and a harvest-cake; and sitting close against this basket was Julian Gower.

Julian had walked over from Beechey, and

had worked all the morning long in the wheat-field. It was such fine weather, he said, that it seemed a pity my grandfather should not get up his crops in it, and secure himself against the chances of a change of weather. So Julian had done the best he could do, with his strong arms, and broad chest, and athletic frame, to aid at the ingathering. Julian was just my age, though he looked younger, as he had not even a promise of whisker, and only a little dark down on his upper lip. He lacked, however, no other physical sign of manfulness. He was six feet high, and was a noble youth to look at—graceful, gracious, bright-eyed, and full of fun. The toil of the day had slightly sobered him, and given him more of a pensive air than he usually had; and I thought, as I looked at his bright brown curls, and his clear eyes, and truthful lips, that I had never seen him more to my taste. As he had been working for so many hours in the broiling sun, it was only natural that he should like to rest himself by my side, and refresh himself with a glass of cider and a little chat.

"Then jolly little Etty is at her lessons?" he asked, in continuation of a previous question.

"Puzzling over her *Telemachus* at this present moment," I answered.

"I suppose she'll go to school soon for a finish," suggested Julian, after a pause.

This was quite a new thought to me, and I said so.

"You were younger when you went for two years to Bridgeliham. She is not so very young, and for the matter of that she is not so very little—though I called her so just now. She is creeping up. She is considerably taller than you as it is, although she wears short frocks."

"I declare you're right, Julian," I answered; "but I do assure you till this minute I have always considered her as a mere nursery pet, just as she was ten years ago. I hope we haven't been inconsiderate to her feelings, and made her too young."

"That I am sure you haven't," responded Julian, quickly; "she has had a happy childhood—a very happy childhood. Who wouldn't be happy, Tibby, living under your serene influence? I was only gossiping as an old friend may gossip."

"Jule," I said, quietly settling the matter in my own mind, "you're very kind to point it out to me. Etty shall go into long dresses this very week, whether she like it or not. And what's more, I'll ask grandpapa to send her to school. She ought now to have better instruction than I can give her."

It may seem strange that I and Julian Gower—neither engaged to each other, nor related in blood to each other, nor in any way connected with each other save by the ties of warm friendship, ay, warm affection, cherished from childhood upward—should thus discuss the propriety of putting my sister Annette (familiarily called Etty) into long dresses, and the advisability of sending her to school. But Julian and I had long been close friends. We were exactly of the same age—twenty-two on the sixteenth of July last past. We had been playmates from the time of my mother's death. While he was at school at Laughton he wrote to me regularly once a week. The greater part of each of his

holidays he had spent at "the College," when we used to fish, and birdsnest, and hunt rats, and slide on the ice together. During his five years' apprenticeship in the horrible Northumberland mines he continued his correspondence, sending me a monthly letter, expensive though postage was in those days; and every year he had paid me a visit. And now that his apprenticeship was finished, and he was able to take a six weeks' holiday, he was spending all the six weeks at Beechey, for the sake of being near me and my grandfather and Etty. It was, therefore, only a matter of course that Julian Gower talked fully and frankly about every thing that interested me.

"I say," said Julian, suddenly, after a minute's silence, "don't you think old Clawline is a humbug?"

This inquiry was suggested by the apparition of the foreman passing slowly down under the opposite hedge of the field in the direction of the wagons and harvest-men.

"Grandpapa thinks him a very valuable servant," I answered, coldly. I thought that Julian was for once inclined to be uncharitable.

"A valuable servant! a foreman!" responded Julian, in a tone of undisguised contempt. "I'll tell you, Tibby, what I should like to do. I should like to pull that fellow's velvet jacket off his back, and take his leather gaiters off, and put a pitchfork in his hand, and say to him, 'Now, Master Clawline, just make yourself handy; and if you don't work to my satisfaction I'll give you a jolly good thrashing with this ash-stick.' I dislike that fellow enormously. He is the only strong man in the field, with the exception of myself; he is paid three times as much as any workman in the field; and yet he is the only man in the field who all this scorching day has not done a single stroke of work."

"Well, well, Julian," I said, in an altered tone, for the sterling truth and earnestness of Julian's criticism had in the space of a few moments caused Mr. Clawline to sink considerably in my estimation, "that's no doubt true what you say of Clawline. Only don't tell grandpapa what you think; don't disturb him."

"Bless you, Tibby, I should not think of doing any such thing!" Julian replied, emphatically. "What good could come of paining dear Mr. Easy? What I say to you is said in confidence to you."

That was all right then. And as it was "in confidence to me," why I liked Julian all the better for having said it.

It was seven o'clock when the harvest horn sounded through the distance—floating from the ridge of the Bilsbury hills over the mere and the ozier ground to our party in Little Bell. At the very moment that the first of the mellow notes reached us our last load of wheat was topped, and went off reeling to the farm buildings amidst the cheers of the men and the gleaners. Then Tom Hilt, who had lost three fingers and an eye in his Majesty's service, seized a horn and answered back the melody of the Bilsbury hills. Then other horns from other distant harvest fields were heard at various points and different degrees of remoteness; and the gleaners, tying up the mouths of their sacks, began to move out of Little Bell in a long, irregular column.

"How's the gleanin'?" inquired my grandfather. "Pretty good?"

"The bestest glinning i' th' sax parishes," cried a shrill-voiced woman; "there ain't no glinning i' th' whol' land like yer riv'rence's. And God bless yer for't, Parson Easy; God bless yer for't!"

And as a general chorus of "God bless yer for't, Parson Easy!" rose from the gleaners, my grandfather became very red in the face and bright in the eyes.

As soon as my grandfather had had a glass of cider and a slice of cake, and had buttoned on his gaiters, and put his straw-hat in a poke, and arrayed himself once more in his three-cornered hat and black coat, Julian drove the "little horse" into the field, all ready for our homeward journey. At "the sounding of the horns" Julian had run off to the homestead and harnessed the pony into the gig himself, and was already on his way to the field when he met Tom Hilt, whom the dignified Mr. Clawline had dispatched to "see after his riv'rence's hobby-cart."

It took some little time for Julian to arrange us to his satisfaction in the gig, for we had to convey to "the College" a largish hamper of potatoes, a bag of turnips for the table, and another smaller hamper containing eggs and honey. To accommodate all this luggage we had to dispose of our legs with more regard to the possible than the graceful. My grandfather's right foot (on the final settlement of difficulties) rested on the step, and his left found lodgment on the top of the little dash-board, the arch thus formed by his left leg being built up with the turnip-bag and egg-basket. As for me, both my feet were on the lid of the potato-hamper, and both my knees were within half a foot of my chin.

When "the little horse" was put in motion, Julian Gower cried out to us cheerily "Good-night!" and leaping a fence made off for Beechey.

And my grandfather and I once more drove with much jingling and rattling through the lanes of the corn country. In the gentle twilight we made our way back to Farnham Cobb with scarce the exchange of a word. I remember that I enjoyed that drive very much. I was so very happy that, though I thought of Julian Gower, I never troubled myself with conjecturing what would become of me in the after-life.

It was not till I got out of the gig at the College gate that I discovered I was cramped through sitting in a constrained attitude.

CHAPTER IV.

LYMM HALL.

TRUE to my promise that I would provide Etty with habiliments suitable to a grown-up young lady, and also do my best to secure her a better education than she had hitherto enjoyed, I attacked my grandfather on the two points as we were jogging along the lanes to Lymm on the 2d of September. The 2d of September was my grandfather's birthday, and on that day we always made an excursion to Lymm—for reasons that will appear in the course of this chapter. On the 2d of September we always dined on cold partridge-pie—in a fashion that will be narrated in the course of this chapter.

I felt that morning somewhat dissatisfied with Etty. Perhaps I should speak more of whole truth if I said that I had felt somewhat unamiable toward her. She had not been well pleased with my proposing to leave her alone at the College all day while I made a pleasant trip with my grandfather. She was in a mode for company, and knew the arrangement would cause her to have a dull time of it. For really Mrs. Skettle was no company at all for a child of her age. As for me, I would readily have stopped at home, and allowed her to take the trip; but the Lymm excursion was an annual and altogether exceptional affair, and my grandfather always wished me to make it with him. On one occasion, when I could not take it with him, he went alone rather than have another companion. The knowledge of that, however, could not reconcile Etty to her day's prospect; and she took out her drawing materials, and slates, and lesson-books in not the best of humors. "How strange it is," she said, as I was setting her the quantity of French exercise and Telemachus I expected of her, "that I should have to obey a little snub-nosed, wall-eyed thing like you!" Now this saucy speech touched me to the quick, and made me for an instant quite angry. The dear child had not intended to annoy me. She only wished to push off her sense of disappointment with one of her quaint sallies. She was far too generous to think of wounding me through any personal defects I might suffer under; and she was too beautiful herself, and too careless of her beauty, to think seriously that an absence of beauty was a gravely important matter. But I was angry, and my eyes flashed angrily; and I was about to give utterance to a stinging reply when the darling, seeing my vexation, in her madly impetuous fashion threw her arms round my neck, and suffocating me with kisses and tears, exclaimed, "Oh, dear Tibby, how unkind, how cruel, how base, how vile, how utterly dishonorable you must think me! But indeed—indeed I didn't mean what I said! I wouldn't hurt you for the world. I only intended to be merry. Don't think severely of me, dear. Do forgive!"

The tiff was soon over. I cried a little in a foolish, half-joyful way, and laughed a great deal more, and kissed Etty inordinately, and then ran off to join my grandfather. But knowing how sensitive the dear child was, and how she would not all the day long be comfortable in her own mind from recollecting her idleness and my silly anger, I could not be easy as I sat behind the little horse and was carried through the lanes. The way to Lymm is for the most part one continuous arch-way of leafage; and that morning the sun was out bright in the blue heavens, and the checkered shade was very pleasant. I should have thoroughly enjoyed it if I could have gone back to Farnham Cobb, just for two seconds, to assure Etty that I loved her better than my own life.

"Grandfather," I said, as we rattled into a long straight lane of avenue—a perfect tunnel of greenery.

"Ay," said my grandfather, looking down at me through his silver-rimmed spectacles.

"I am going to put Etty into long dresses."

"Goodness, child!" exclaimed my grandfather with astonishment, dropping his whip to

the dash-board, and letting go the reins in his astonishment. "Goodness, child! don't be ridiculous! You'll be making her the laughing-stock of the whole parish. A child like that in a woman's dress! The notion is preposterous!"

"She is taller than I am," I quietly answered. "She is no longer the little pert fatty—all smiles and dimples—that she was two and three years since. She has grown prodigiously of late. You would hardly think it, but I have actually, in the last twelve months, let out four inches of tuck in her old short skirts and frilled drawers, and they are still too short for her. She grows like a scarlet-runner. She'll be a perfect Maypole."

"Um!" observed my grandfather; and he drove the next mile without opening his lips, in deep thought.

"I declare, Tibby," he at last exclaimed, with an energy and a suddenness that made me start in my seat, "you're quite right. As usual, you're quite right. Your judgment, my dear girl, is unassailable. Etty *does* grow like a scarlet-runner. She'll be as tall a woman as her great-grandmother Watson. She must go into long dresses instantly."

So far so good! Point No. 1 was gained. Now for point No. 2.

"And don't you think, grandfather, she ought to go to school? Say for a year and half, or a couple of years—just for a finish."

My dear grandfather shook in his seat.

"Um!" he said again.

This second period of consideration extended over two miles of green lane, crossed a brook, and went as far as the middle of Tattham Common.

I watched him with anxious curiosity as he fidgeted in his seat, dropped the reins, picked them up again, and flipped the little horse with his whip. I was grieved to see an expression of trouble come over his face, as if a mental pain tried him.

"My dear Tibby," at last the dear old man rejoined, in a tone of expostulation, "I really don't see the necessity. You are yourself highly accomplished. No expense has been spared on *your* education."

"Oh, dear me, none," I put in, quickly.

"You paint in water-colors—you are a modern linguist," continued my grandfather, running through the intellectual attainments he supposed me to possess; "you are a sufficient historian; you are a pianist; you are a sound theologian; and—you *have* the instrument."

The concluding particular of the catalogue referred to the old piano, already mentioned in these pages, for which my grandfather had a respect almost amounting to superstition. I do verily believe that in his more romantic moments he thought "the instrument" was by itself able to educate a young lady in all the departments of useful and ornamental knowledge.

Had he stopped when he called me a sound theologian, I could have debated the point with him. But the emphasis he laid on his last words rendered me unable to reply.

He was silent again for a few minutes, when he turned round upon me and said, slowly—bringing the little horse to a dead stop, in order that his words might be the more impressive—"My dear Tibby, you must dismiss this thought

from your mind. I can not consent to send Etty to school."

Having said this he turned away his face, and I saw that the look of trouble was still on it. This may appear to some a trifling incident to make so much of, but it impressed me much at the time.

Of course I did not renew my appeal. Attributing my dear grandfather's refusal to an affectionate reluctance on his part to send his playmate, Etty, out of the circle of his daily interests, I determined at the moment never again to repeat my painful proposal.

It never occurred to me that one of his reasons for declining to accede to my request was the pecuniary cost of compliance. Still further from my mind was any suspicion that the cost was beyond his means. He had sent me to the best girls' school in our side of the county; it was therefore only natural in me to suppose that he could afford to do the same for my sister. But considerations of money at that time of my life never entered into my head. Simple as our life was, it was secure for the period from any of the chilling and nipping influences of poverty. We lived in a house well supplied with servants and generous fare. Our apparel was far superior to that of any other inhabitants of Farnham Cobb. We were the gentlefolk of the village; looked up to, courted, imitated. It was true, we led a very secluded life; never had company; never heard of dinner-parties or tea-parties, had not more than half a dozen acquaintances of our rank to bow to in the whole world, never by any chance went out on a staying visit; and, consequently, did not indulge in many of those daily expenses which are usual with people in the middle way of life. But as in our limited field of experience we never had to deny ourselves any object of our wishes, because we couldn't afford it, and as we were manifestly much richer than our immediate neighbors, I had never regarded myself, and Etty, and my grandfather as at all approaching the condition of the poor. How, therefore, was I to imagine that my dear grandfather, on my asking him to give Etty as good an education as he had given me, thought of a narrow income, and its inability to effect what I desired?

My education was by no means so complete as my dear grandfather supposed. As to my being a sound theologian, I simply was in the habit of reading the prayer-book and homilies as well as the Bible. But partly because I was quick at fetching out any text my grandfather might need for touching up his sermons, and partly because he had appointed me, on the foundation, Vicegerent of the College, with a salary of £10 per annum, and partly because I played our old organ in the village church, he would persist in trying to make out that I was as learned as a bishop. It was rather provoking of him sometimes. It was true I could read French with facility, and knew a little Italian, and that I painted very badly indeed in water-colors. But surely those accomplishments were slender accomplishments to make so much fuss about. Bridgeham School was an excellent one, kept by a good, gentle, and zealous mistress; but it was all on the oldest possible fashion. More attention was paid in it to the young ladies' fancy work than any thing else. Every young lady, in her last year before leaving, had to work with her needle an

exquisite little baby's cap and shirt—to take with her and keep against the time she should marry and have a little baby to wear them. In my last year I embroidered those quaint articles of apparel. The shirt was of the finest French lawn, and I let into each shoulder-piece an elaborate piece of point lace, half an inch wide, and of my own work too. The cap and the little lawn jacket were in my lavender drawer at "the College," and sometimes I really enjoyed taking them out from among my stock of treasures and wondering how many years it would be before they would be used. It would be thought very reprehensible and highly indelicate to put young ladies at boarding-school to such pastime now. I imagine that any schoolmistress at Brighton, or Bath, or elsewhere, who should dare to set up a baby-linen class, would be accused of putting wrong notions and mischievous ideas into her pupils' heads, and would speedily come to ruin. But reflecting on my own happy and innocent girlhood, I can honestly say that if I had a little girl now, I should like her to be brought up in every particular as I was brought up in "the good old time."

As I rode on toward Lymm, thinking of my old school-days at Bridgeham, I was determining to do my best to supply Etty's want of a school education.

On arriving at Lymm—a village containing two small and humble farm-houses and about twenty cottages, made up into a sort of street—we left our "little horse" to be cared for by the landlord of "The Eye and Spectacle," or "Eye and Spettacle," as the inhabitants of Lymm called it; and taking from the gig our basket, holding the cold partridge-pie, and Madeira, and the *et cetera*, we walked off to spend the day, surveying the graves and the home of my grandfather's immediate ancestors.

We first went into the church and saw the tombs of the Easies and the Trees, who had for generations owned the land of the large and fertile parish of Lymm, and had throughout all the generations been fast friends, though they had never intermarried, until the last of the Trees married my mother, and contributed me and Etty to the population of Great Britain. The grandest of the Easy monuments was a square marble chest, inscribed "Sacred to the Memory of Marmaduke Easy, Gentleman, of Lymm Hall, and Five Hundred Acres of Heavy Land in This Parish. He died, *ÆTAT.* 50, *A.D.* 1780." As my grandfather stood over this monument his head and hands shook, for it contained the ashes of his father, the bluff, hearty Marmaduke Easy, who quitted the world shortly after the slight, thoughtful, pale-faced Solomon Easy had taken orders.

On the head of my great-grandfather's tomb was sculptured the family device—a shield with a solitary human eye in its centre, and with "*Oculus Videt*" under it for a motto. It was a punning device on the name of the Easies or Eye-sees. A similar heraldic atrocity attested the gentility of the Trees. The stone beneath which my father and mother slept was engraved with a shield bearing THREE mockeries of trees (closely resembling *hearth-brushes*), and a motto, "*Tres Virent*." My dear grandfather was a scholar and a gentleman, and yet he took quite a lively pleasure in dusting out these absurd memorials of family pretension, and in staring

at them with all his might. I could not sympathize with him, and I very nearly told him so.

Quitting the church, we walked to the cottage of old Simon Lee. Simon was ninety-six years old, and had in his day been a farm-laborer, serving my great-grandfather Marmaduke, and his father before him. Simon had for years lived out of my grandfather's purse instead of the parish chest; but he was now in so dilapidated a condition that he could not recognize his benefactor, and, it would appear, did nothing for days together but cough and breathe hard.

"Father, here's his riv'rence," cried Simon's daughter, a woman aged seventy, in a shrill voice—"the Riv'rent Solomon Easy. Don't yer knoo him?"

I should say that the woman pronounced our name "Azy," as it was invariably pronounced by the poor people of "the corn country."

No sign of intelligence on the part of Simon.

"Azy—Azy—Azy," screamed the daughter into her father's ear. "Azy—Azy."

"Ugh!" grunted poor old Simon, shifting his body in the bed to which he had been confined for years. "Azy!—Ugh—allus—war—Azys."

After repeating these three words several times, Simon fell back into stertorous breathing, and could not be again aroused. Simon's daughter, however, was much elated at the success of her device for making her father talk. She maintained that no one else could have extracted so much from her sire; and becoming metaphorical and imaginative as she proceeded in her course of exultation, she declared "she could plai on th' oold man jest fur awl the world as if he war an oold flewte."

My grandfather also was much gratified with old Simon's testimony to the antiquity of the Easy family, and notified his delight by putting a gold piece on the table, and saying, "Fine old man—faithful old man!"

Bidding a silent farewell to Simon, we continued our excursion, sauntering leisurely across the church paddock and the low meadows, climbing the bold grass ridge known as the Lymm banks, passing under the gnarled and ancient branches of the Lymm oaks, and presenting ourselves before Lymm Hall.

An old, high-battlemented hall, built of red brick, abounding in bow-windows, and rich in works of grotesque sculpture, perched on the top of turrets or stuck in the corners of projecting walls. Yellow lichen on the massive stone frames of windows, glazed with diamond-shaped panes—ever so small. A very broad, deep moat completely surrounding the house, its garden, and precinct. The surface of the moat in places covered with water-lilies in blossom, in places covered with a seum of bright green vegetation, showing yellow in the flecks of sunlight, and attracting swarms of flies and minute insects. The quiet water of the moat touching the walls and lying under the bow-windows of the lower rooms. Green meadow grass, kept smooth and fine by the mouths of browsing sheep, running down to the edge of the water. Rich tufts of "forget-me-not" glinting out on the bank's verge here and there. A herd of oaks and forest trees, neither crowded nor regular, throwing their enormous branches over the moat in the direction of the turrets and steep roof; other huge trees in

the moated garden sending their branches to meet those on the opposite bank. Sunlight and shadow in marked contrast; scorching light above the trees, cool shade under them. No sound but the splash of the fish fitfully leaping and rollicking about in the water. Imagine this scene, and the old man, with his grand-daughter by his side, looking at it.

Such a place to look upon was Lymm Hall, the strong-hold for centuries of the old feudal Lords of Lymm, that had passed during the protectorate of Cromwell from its original possessors to the family of Giles, and a century later was transferred from the Gileses to the house of Easy. All the dates and particulars of these changes of ownership may be read in Quantock's History of the Corn Country. Enough for the present journal to say that the Barons of Lymm came into possession attended by men in armor bearing pikes in their hands, and that the Gileses and Easies walked into the seat of their earthly grandeur guarded by scribes, with pens behind their ears.

"Yo—ho! Such fishing! I have had almost enough. So you make as much noise as you like," cried a cheering, ringing voice from the other side of the moat.

It was Julian Gower.

Stationed on a grass clump, under a canopy of yew, with tackle and landing-net by his side, Julian was still playing with the fish. He *had* had sport! Of that there was no doubt. We went round to the bridge, crossed the moat, and joined him in the garden, when we found him (other minor prey excepted) triumphant over an enormous pike, which, on being put in the scales, proved to be more than 30 pounds in weight.

"Good sport, Sir?" inquired Julian, looking deferentially at my grandfather.

"Capital. How did you get leave?"

"I saw Mr. Gurley last week, and he gave me an order for one day's sport. The keeper didn't half like the appearance of Mr. Gurley's signature; but he could not offer positive opposition, and I gave him five shillings."

"Jule," said my grandfather, with some fervor, "time was you should have fished here night and day, and shot over the land from the beginning of September to the end of October, and no keeper should have dared to have an opinion on the matter."

"Thank you, Mr. Easy," Julian answered: just as if my grandfather had presented him with the right of fishing and shooting. "I'm sure—I'm much obliged to you."

"But," he added, "I am very hungry, Mr. Easy. Sha'n't we dine? The table is all ready."

We dined under the Queen Oak (so called from a tradition that Queen Elizabeth, on a visit to Lymm Hall, had admired it, and feasted at its foot), on a table spread and set out by Julian, with the hospitable aid of the tenant-farmer, who was now the sole occupant of the hall; and when I had put upon the white cloth the cold partridge-pie, and the Madeira, and the *et cetera* that I had brought with me, I thought I never had seen a prettier table—Julian had ornamented it so tastefully with flowers.

After dinner my grandfather went into the hall to climb up the oak staircase, to pry about the old corners, to look through the bits of stained-glass window, to visit the room where

his mother was most accustomed to sit over her needle-work in the after-part of the day, to sit a while in the little parlor where his father best loved to drink his spiced cup and sing his hunting songs.

While he was so occupied Julian and I strolled about the walks of the garden, once trim and dainty, but now overgrown and neglected. A rank green moss covered the gravel on which brightly-attired ladies and gentlemen had paced, coquetting and vowing, laughing and love-making, centuries before.

We talked about our past and present experiences, and a little about our future cares and joys—my life in the southern corn country, his life on the banks of the Tyne. I told him that Etty was to be made more of a woman of, but that she wouldn't be sent to school. And when I narrated to him the particulars of my conversation with my grandfather on the latter subject, he warmly praised me for the part I had taken in it, and especially enjoined me that I should not again speak to Mr. Easy on the matter. He encouraged me to get Etty as forward, and make her as clever as I could, by myself. Then he talked more fully of his new engagement in the North—as an under-viewer in one of the mines of Mr. Martin Orger, the richest mine-owner in all the north of England. He even told me exactly how much he was to be paid every fortnight, and what his prospects were. It made me for a short minute or two rather sad to think his prospects were not brighter; but he was very hopeful—as I have invariably found all great, manful, noble natures to be.

"I shall do well one day, Tibby," he said, with a laugh. "I am poor now, but I sha'n't be so always. I am a servant now, but one of these days I'll be a master."

"And a good one too, Julian," I answered.

"Ay, I trust so. Any how, I won't take a leaf out of old Clawline's book. I won't think it beneath me to take off my coat 'tew my wark,' and I'll try to be a good master. You know, Tibby, a good master is a grand thing."

"Is it?" I asked, not wanting any assurance on the point, but wishing to bring him out into an earnest talk. I liked him when he was merry and mischievous; I felt pride in him when he displayed his strength, either of body or of intelligence; but I was solemnly happy when he spoke seriously on gravely important matters.

"You know," he said, clenching his fist, and bringing it down with a blow on his knee (we were sitting on the ground at the time), "I must have the real thing of both words—a master who is really a *master*, and goodness that is really goodness. This is just how it is with my own heart. I declare to you, Tibby, I do thoroughly enjoy obeying a first-rate master—a man who knows more than myself, is every way stronger than myself, has lots of pluck, shows consideration for others, and doesn't think himself every body. Give me a captain like that, and I enjoy obeying him as much as I should enjoy being first in command myself. But once in my short life I had to be under a little, dictatorial, presumptuous, ill-conditioned fool—always afraid that people shouldn't take him at his own estimate, jealous to madness of every one naturally superior to himself, and always putting himself into pig-headed passions. Well, you know, Tib-

by, I couldn't help, really, and without any mistake about it, *hating* that fellow! I could almost imagine myself in some hot moment, after years of provocation, knocking him on the head, and doing for him. I could, indeed!"

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Oh, never mind his name," was the generous answer. "If I tell you his name you'll be prejudiced against him, and dislike him at first sight, if ever you should meet him. And that would not be fair to him. It's enough that I hated him, and that I don't believe it's in human nature, taking a wide view of it, to hate really good masters, or to be any thing but very fond of them."

"What sort of a man will be over you at Shorton?"

"Oh, a stunner, Tibby—a regular stunner. To be such 'a chief' as Mr. Clay, Mr. Orger's head-viewer, is the highest point of my ambition. To be such a man as he is, and have such a place as he has, is all I wish for. But you know it did me a real lot of service to smart and grind my teeth for a few months under the other fellow."

"Did you good, Julian? How should it have done you good?"

"It taught me," he said, slowly and very impressively, but very simply—not at all as if he were preaching—"how bitter and cruel and grievous a thing it is to be treated unjustly by a superior. And that's a lesson, Tibby, which (as the world goes) it's well worth a man's learning thoroughly once in his life, if he is an honest man, wishing to do what is right in life. It teaches him *why* and *how* he should think for others."

We were silent for a minute.

"Ah," he repeated after the pause, reverting to his former thought, "to be such a man as Mr. Clay is all I wish!"

"All—every thing?" I asked, feeling a little nettled.

"Every thing," he answered.

I felt disappointed.

"You know," he added, in an explanatory manner, "Mr. Clay has a wife and a family of children, of whom he is very fond."

"Then you'd want them?" I asked, now quite pleased.

"You know I should," he answered, looking at me with his magnificent dark eyes, so that my heart beat very fast, and I was afraid I had displeased him. "You know I should. But you know also I mayn't think of having a wife and children till I am a master."

"You'll have them in good time," I answered, though I felt my voice falter, "and be a very happy man; and in the mean time—"

"In the mean time don't put your last question to me again."

"You are not angry, Julian?" I asked, in a fright.

"Bless you, Tibby," he cried, playfully, jumping up from the ground and assisting me to rise, gallantly kissing my right hand as he did so—"what a silly notion! I angry with you? Com', it's clear we've been here long enough. Let's make haste and find Mr. Easy. The evening is beginning to close in."

We found my grandfather on the bridge, and in company with him we sauntered down the

Lymm Banks, every now and then turning round to look at the setting sun. At the "Eye and Spettacle" my grandfather and I resumed our modest equipage, and having bade adieu to Julian, drove back—slowly, very slowly—the long twelve miles to Farnham Cobb.

My grandfather was unusually taciturn on his way home. At first I made a few ineffectual attempts to rouse him to conversation; but finding my exertions fruitless, I also lapsed into a fit of silence that lasted for nearly an hour. The quiet stars were out in the heavens, and I turned my face up to them, watching them without trying to read my fortune in them.

"Yes, Tibby," said my grandfather, suddenly recalling me from my star-gazing, "he is a young man of great promise—of singular promise."

"I am glad to hear you say so, grandpapa," I answered, for I knew well on whom his thoughts ran.

"And he has splendid fortunes before him."

"Splendid?"

"Ay, my dear, golden," returned my grandfather, warmly, twirling his whip round in his ardent till it cracked. "Whoever lives to see thirty years after I am in my grave, will see that young man opulent, powerful, honored. The large fortunes of the country are made in the North—not the tranquil South. Wherever large fortunes are being made there is a field for talent, character, and address such as Julian possesses. My dear, Julian will be a successful man. What's more, he'll be a good man. And she'll be a happy woman who becomes his wife. Mark my words."

I did mark his words. I distrusted them then. I feared they were the outpouring of a too sanguine temperament, and could not all be realized. But as I recall them now I must admit they have been fulfilled with startling accuracy. Opulent, powerful, honored, all these is Julian Gower, and his wife is the happiest of women.

It was past nine o'clock when we alighted at the College gate. Isaac Stoddart, lantern in hand, took our little horse, and I tripped quickly under the walnuts to announce our return to Mrs. Skettle and Etty. It was dark in the garden, and I slipped into the hall unobserved.

At a table in a distant corner sat Etty, busy with her drawing materials, her back toward the garden entrance, and the light on the table before her, flashing its rays against her golden hair, and giving the scene a light-and-shade effect that called to my mind some engravings of Dutch pictures I had once seen.

"Boh!" I cried, when I had come close behind Etty's chair.

She started up, and began to scold me for startling her.

"Why, child," was my next exclamation, "what are you about?"

"It's your portrait, Tibby!" cried the child, in high glee. "I've been copying it from my birthday locket, and shading it in after my own mind—for I do so like thinking about your face, dear!"

"Although I am a snub-nosed little thing, and have wall-eyes."

"Oh don't, Tibby!" supplicated Etty, reddening up. "Do forget that, dear!"

Etty had really managed her portrait very

well. The birthday locket she spoke of was a trinket given her by my grandfather—my portrait on one side, and hers on the reverse—done by that black court-plaster process which was popular in "the old time."

CHAPTER V.

TWO SHORT YEARS.

THE next Sunday was Julian's last day of vacation in "the corn country." He spent it with us, walking over the eight miles from Beechey to our breakfast, attending me down to the church when I went there to instruct my class, blowing the organ while I played on it during the afternoon service, sauntering with me and Etty round the common before tea, and in the evening luring my grandfather on to tell us some of his old stories. When he left the College he had a hearty benediction from us all. My grandfather insisted on his having another, and yet another, glass of our ancient "yellow seal;" and bade him, on getting once more to Tyne side, not forget his old friends in the South.

"Good-by, Jule, write often to us," I said to him at the hall door.

He took my hand, and besides shaking it warmly, raised it to his lips and kissed it, saying, "Think of me often, Tibby, and bear in mind what I said to you the other day in Lymm Hall garden."

"That I will, Jule," I answered, warmly, "and it will make me very happy to think about it."

"Unkind, cruel Julian, to kiss Tibby's hand and only shake mine!" cried Etty, shaking her golden curls at him.

He looked at the beautiful creature for an instant, and blushing slightly, stooped and kissed her on the forehead.

The child was astonished and pleased; but, though I doubt not her little heart was sad enough at parting with our old playmate, she could not restrain her customary merriment. "Thank you, Jule," she cried; "but since you are so liberal with your attentions, don't forget Mrs. Skettle."

"Surely not," replied Julian, gravely, instantly giving the old lady the old-fashioned salute.

Had a cracker exploded under Mrs. Skettle's hoop she could not have been more astonished. She had not recovered from the first shock of her surprise ere the door closed on Julian, and he was gone.

He kept his promise of writing to us often—long letters full of the minutest particulars of every subject that interested him. I do verily believe that the inmates of our secluded home at Farnham Cobb knew as much of Northumbria and her affairs as the keenest business men of the North. I am sure we knew more than Mr. Martin Orger himself about the Shorton mines—about the depth, and extent, and quality of the seams; about the spots where ventilation was most difficult, and foul air most abundant; about the pitmen and their labors. Etty knew all about the safety-lamps of Dr. Clanny, and George Stephenson, and Sir Humphrey Davy, and was able any day of the week to write off a

chapter on the history of mining. Long ere our sleepy neighbors had begun to take any interest in railways, we were familiar with all the past and present of iron-roads and locomotives.

Indeed the young under-viewer of the Shorton mines was the hero of Farnham Cobb College. In the long winter evenings we used to talk about him before gossiping on other topics, and when we had exhausted all other topics our tongues went back to him. My grandfather on that subject became a romancer and poet of the highest order, representing in glowing terms the wealth, and dignity, and distinctions that awaited that "singularly promising young man." It was only natural that Etty should sympathize with me and my grandfather, and grow up to regard Julian as the greatest and best of men.

Not infrequently Julian's letters contained a sheet written for my private eye. These sheets were written (after the commencement of his life at Shorton) in a vein unlike the spirit of any of his former compositions; and as time went on, their peculiar object was even more and more plainly declared. They were variations and expansions of that old hope first communicated to me in the Lynn Hall garden—that one day he would have a wife and children to love and be loved by. He particularly enjoined me not to let Etty read or guess the contents of these sheets. It was too soon, he said, for her to know her elders entertained such thoughts. In this I fully concurred; and I liked Julian all the

better for wishing to confine to our breasts the delicious secret—which only two hearts should know—the secret which even he only vaguely indicated to his solitary confidante! It was considerate to Etty, delicate to me, and chivalric in himself, that he was so particular on this point.

And days passed on—swiftly and happily, with seed-time and harvest, in the fat and sleepy corn country.

At the end of twelve months Julian Gower came down from Northumberland for a visit of three days. He could not stop longer, for his duties at Shorton were urgent, and the time spent in traveling from the Tyne to the South consumed the chief part of his short holidays. During those days he was altogether with us, save at nights when he ran over the country to Beechey; and Etty seemed to enjoy his company not less than I did. Of that I was very glad; for I loved Julian Gower, and I wanted all who cared for me to love him also. Yes, I loved him—with all the intensity and purity of a woman's love. The time was when I dared not say this—when to acknowledge it would have brought ruby shame into my cheeks and humiliation to my eyes. But that time was long since. And now I write with exultant pride—I loved Julian Gower with all my heart, and soul, and strength.

Again Julian left us.

Again the sunny, yellow harvest-tide came round.

And with it came again Julian Gower.

BOOK II.

JULIAN GOWER: BEING WRITTEN BY MR. JULIAN GOWER, AT THE REQUEST OF THE REV. SOLOMON EASY'S GRAND-DAUGHTER TABITHA.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, ETC.

HAVING been requested by the Rev. Solomon Easy's grand-daughter Tabitha to write a brief account of certain specified occurrences in my life, I consent to do so, only stipulating that nothing I here write shall be in any way altered either by herself, or by any person to whom she may hereafter intrust its publication. My pursuits have never led me to encourage any literary faculty I may possess, and my contribution to her collection of memoirs may consequently be very faulty. But I like things to be genuine. Whenever I read a document, or hear a speech, I like to feel assured that my mind is receiving the genuine thoughts of the writer or orator, without subtraction, addition, or superficial spurious adornment of any kind. I have, therefore, laid a particular injunction on the lady not to dress up or smooth down my communication to her.

I am at the present day not unknown, but I was once an obscure young man—industrious and well-intentioned, but poor. It is of myself at the time that I was an obscure young man that I am going to speak. I was as strong and healthy, and in every way respectable a man then as I am now, but those who met me for the

first time were less inclined to credit me with good qualities and efficient abilities. And they were justified in to a certain extent mistrusting me. Confidence is a plant of slow growth, and a young man ought not to be angry because he does not find it full-grown, in blossom, and ready for him to pluck in strange breasts, be they old or young.

Among the good and beneficial accidents of my life, for which I am deeply grateful to the Disposer of all human events, I hold it foremost that in my youth I was brought up and educated in the country among simple and honest people, gentle in their natures, and pure in their habits—conscientious and devout. If in my course through life I have been enabled to attach men to me, and influence them on some occasions for the better, I attribute it to a sound knowledge of ordinary everyday human nature, acquired by thorough familiarity in early life with a few honest persons, mingling with each other in all candor, and without concealment or pretension, as the members of a rural society are more likely than the inhabitants of cities to mingle with each other. The circumstances of life in an agricultural district are, I think, favorable to honesty—the moral influence being strong; and every observant person knowing thoroughly the histories and actions of his neighbors, and being

aware that his history and actions are in like manner known.

My father was an officer in the East India Company's army, and was the son of a well-to-do London merchant. He married a pretty girl, the daughter of a farmer in "the corn country," offending in some slight measure his family by the step. They thought a farmer's daughter beneath them, and frankly told my father so. He with equal frankness retorted that he wanted neither their criticisms nor their approval; and then went his way to the East, taking his bride with him. In three years he and my mother had passed from this world, leaving me and my younger brother to the goodwill of our relations and the protection of that noble institution—the old East India Company.

My father's relations did not pay me and my brother much attention. I can not altogether blame them for keeping us at a distance. They were rich, we were poor. It is certainly very disagreeable for prosperous and fashionable people to be surrounded and pounced on by poor kindred. It would have been chivalric if my father's brother and his set had made more friendly advances to us. But they didn't. And it would unquestionably have been petty and mean if we on our parts had nursed any thing like heart-burning for the slight. We did no such thing. Our grand uncle, and splendid aunt, and exquisite cousins grew, as we approached years of discretion, to be subjects of joke with us, our boyish tempers not being embittered by the knowledge that in the composition of the family statue we were the clay and not the gilding.

My brother Monkton and I were sent down to "the corn country" to pass our childhood in the house of a bachelor uncle (on my mother's side)—a small tenant-farmer, who never in all his days wore a coat that was not made of fustian, or a waistcoat was not a red one. The farm-servants lived in the same room, and fed off the same bacon and dumplings, with us. This custom no longer exists in the corn country, and in the face of glib gentlemen who are severe on the gross sensuality and crass ignorance of farmers in the good old time, and who maintain that every thing was corrupt and abominable in the good old time, I do not hesitate to lament that this usage has expired. The increased personal refinement of the wealthier of the humbler classes tells against the well-being of the humblest class of all. A farmer and his daughters would nowadays find the society of servants unpalatable. I don't at all blame them for it—I only state the fact. They keep themselves to themselves, and only approach their menials and workmen to order, supervise, scold, or pay them money. But fifty years since agricultural workmen, sitting at board with their social superiors, had a better and more humanizing time of it than they have now. They heard their masters and mistresses gossip about the affairs of the neighborhood, the news of the papers, the business and amusements of the markets and county town. They were thus raised a grade—perhaps only a trifling one, but still a grade—above their servile cares, and drawn into harmonious action with those above them. Masters nowadays prate about humanizing and ameliorating the lower orders, and hope to achieve their object by feasting their

servants once a year, or preaching to them once a month. Fifty years since, these masters would have lived with their servants, and carved for them daily. Many of my friends tell me I am a little mad on this subject, and that I lose my common sense when I begin to talk about the good old times. Perhaps they are right. All I can say is—I wish to remain in the wrong.

Living at Beechey in the holidays, Monkton and I spent the greater portion of our days at Laughton, as boarders at the Laughton Grammar School—playing cricket in the park of Laughton Abbey, and bathing or skating (according to the seasons) in or on "the Abbey water." A very good education we got there, in company with forty or fifty other lads—sons of the richer farmers and the petty gentry of the district. The head-master was a clergyman, and a very learned man. If I recollect rightly he wrote a Greek treatise, proving that Eve and Semiramis were the same. I know he professed the most awful opinions; but as he never promulgated them save in a learned language he did no one any harm, and never shocked public opinion. I know also that he was positively terrific in his use of the birch. People tell us nowadays that the birch was one of the degrading engines and abominable contrivances of the good old time, and that its use in our public schools breaks down the dignity and independence and all that sort of thing of the Anglo-Saxon boy. Fudge!—it certainly never degraded Monkton; and I don't believe it degraded me. And as for the doctor—he was no barbarian. Not a bit of it. I dined with him twenty years after I left school, and found him a very fine old fellow with most courtly manners.

Our pensions from the E. I. C. paid the school-bills and furnished us with our wardrobes. In the holidays our honest uncle gave us bed and board at Beechey; and about once in two years we were had up to London to stay in a big house in Russell Square with our "grand relatives." A pretty time we used to have of it with my magnificent aunt! She used to deplore our bad manners—confound her! she didn't mend them! She used to laugh at the outrageously bad make of our clothes—confound her! her money never bought us better! Then our cousins, just our own ages, used by turns to fight shy of us, or snub us with the information that we "should have to work for our living." Poor little bloodless creatures, it was a precious good job for them that they hadn't to work for theirs! So perfectly disgusted were Monkton and I with the tone of society in Russell Square that I do verily believe we, at the early ages of twelve and ten, should have stuck down at Beechey, and "cut" our magnificent relatives, if it hadn't been for the fun of the theatres, and the ride on the stage-coach up to town, and the stupendous and very novel dishes we got on party nights.

On the whole, it was just as well that we did not cut my uncle. For in a certain sort of insolent way he did look out for our interests; and just as Monkton was entering on his sixteenth year (I being two years younger) he procured the lad a commission in the Bengal Native Infantry.

It was a sad day for me when Monkton started for India, full of heroic resolves, and wonder-

ing how long he would have to wait for a mustache.

Poor fellow! I never saw him again!

His absence greatly altered Laughton school and "the corn country" to me. I was at first very unhappy for want of him, although my importance was increased at school by having a brother "an officer."

CHAPTER II.

AT SCHOOL.

I PELL in love when I was seventeen. Most lads of seventeen years, when they fall in love, fix their affections on middle-aged women. I didn't. My first love was a young lady—the grand-daughter of the Reverend Solomon Easy, Gerent of Farnham Cobb College, Vicar of Farnham Cobb, and owner of Sandhill, a bad farm in the corn country.

How I first came to know the Reverend Solomon Easy, and be received in Farnham Cobb College as one of the vicar's family, deserves narration. It was in my first half-year at Laughton Grammar School. The boys were returning from cricket in the Abbey Park, marching up the High Street in a long troop, bearing bats and balls. I was at the tail of the army, lagging behind under a burden of wickets, about ten yards in the rear of the boy next in front of myself. I was not so big then as I am now; my legs could not get over the ground so quickly as those of the other boys; and, moreover, I had to bear a load, that was not an affair of indifference to a little boy. I don't mention these facts as grounds of complaint; far from it. I was the smallest boy in the school; it was therefore quite right that I should carry the six stumps and a man's-size bat on my shoulders. Tomkins was six feet high, and the biggest and oldest boy in the school; it was therefore quite right that he should only be required to carry the bats in the pocket of his flannel jacket. The arrangement was a fit and beneficial one. It prepared me for the rules of the larger and sterner world outside the school-gates, where labor is the duty of the young, and relaxation is the privilege of the old.

"How old are you, my little fellow?" inquired a strange voice behind me.

Before answering I turned round to examine my questioner.

"Just seven years old, Sir," I then replied, seeing by his style, which strongly prepossessed me in his favor, that he was a gentleman, and consequently was guilty of no impertinence in accosting me. At that early age I had an enormous notion of my own dignity.

"Dear me, just poor little Tibby's age!" put in my interlocutor, whom from his dress I marked down as a clergyman. "You must be the smallest boy in the school."

"I can't help that, Sir," I answered. "I can run faster than a good many of them."

"Don't you find your load too much for you?"

"Dear me, no! I could carry a hundred times as much, Sir," I answered respectfully, but with a flash of pride.

The clergyman (he was an elderly man) was clearly pleased with my answer, for he laughed,

and when he had done laughing, asked, "What's your name, my fine little fellow?"

This inquiry seemed to me exactly of a piece with all the rest of his impudence, and I thought of resenting it as I looked up at him archly; but he was so kind and jolly a gentleman to regard, and, moreover, spoke so politely to me, that I answered, civilly, "Julian Gower, Sir."

"Gower—Gower? Julian Gower? To be sure, you have an uncle, a farmer, who lives at Beechey?"

"Beechey is my home."

"Ay, I shoot over your uncle's farm every year."

"Do you, Sir?" I rejoined. And then putting in a word for my honest uncle's interests, I added, "He's particularly fond of jugged hare."

The gentleman laughed outright at this, and patted me on the head. I could not for the life of me see what there was in my simple intimation to tickle him so immensely.

"I knew your mother, my little friend, before she married; and she was, in her day, the prettiest girl all the country round."

"I am glad of that."

"Why?"

"Because I never heard she was pretty before, and I like to know it. But, Sir, I must be running on, or I shall get shut out, and then there'll be a row."

"Bless me, my dear young friend," cried the gentleman, in a voice of alarm, as if he had a lively appreciation of what the "row" might be, "don't let me get you into trouble. Here be off, but oblige me by taking this."

He offered me half a crown.

"No, I thank you, Sir," I replied, drawing back and turning scarlet, as I declined to accept the tip.

"Why," said the gentleman, with a look of overpowering surprise, "why won't you take it?"

"Because I don't know you, Sir."

"A capital reason, I declare," exclaimed my companion, warmly; "an excellent distinction, an admirable rule for a school-boy! You don't know me—but I'll enter my pig-tail at New-market races if you sha'n't know me."

With these words the gentleman abruptly turned away into the yard of the principal inn in the High Street; and I, running at the top of my speed, overtook my school-fellows just as they were passing "through gates," as we used to term it.

On getting into the play-ground I immediately sought out my elder brother and loyally confided to him the particulars of this interview. I had a great respect for Monkton. He used to thrash me every now and then, when I was cocky and required to be taken down a peg or two; so I looked up to him with a kind of filial awe. At the same time he never permitted any boy he could thrash to molest me. He appeared to me therefore in the light of a protector.

"It's a *find*," said Monkton, sententiously, when I had come to the end of my story.

"What do you mean by 'a find'?" I asked, childishly, for I was then so new to school-life that I did not understand some of the simplest expressions.

"Something'll come of it," explained Monkton.

"What sort of thing, Monkton?"

"Oh! I should say he'll ask you to his house, and send you oceans of 'badgers!'"

At Laughton Grammar School hampers of prog were called badgers.

"I'm sure I hope you're right, Monkton," I answered, glowing with the thought of the hospitality I would exercise to every body in the box-room.

"But, young'un," added Monkton, with an air of parental authority and grave worldly wisdom, "I advise you to keep this to yourself. I shan't speak about it, and you'd better not. You see, perhaps Tomkins might not like it."

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Well, your orders were to carry the stumps and the bat, not to talk to gentlemen in the High Street; and perhaps Tomkins mayn't like it. He is very kind, but still he is captain of the school, and you were out of orders."

"Thank you, Monkton."

My dear brother had a lively veneration for all constituted authorities; so have I.

Monkton was right. Something did come of it. There was a regulation at Laughton Grammar School, permitting boarders to visit their friends on Saturdays, stopping out all Sunday, and returning early on Monday. This considerate arrangement had never as yet brought good either to me or my brother, for we had no intimate friends in the corn country save my uncle, and Beechey was too far from Laughton for him to think of having us home for so short a time as a day and two nights.

The Saturday next succeeding my adventure saw me called into "the doctor's" study to "see a gentleman." My heart beat high, and I felt sure who "the gentleman" was; and I was right in my conjecture, for on entering the doctor's awe-inspiring sanctum "the gentleman" (who turned out to be the Reverend Solomon Easy) shook me by the hand.

"Gower, Secundus," observed the doctor, smiling at me with polite benevolence, "you were quite right to decline the half-crown this gentleman kindly offered you. I approve your conduct, and believe you'll turn out a gentleman when you grow up."

The doctor's speech pleased me so much that I loved him heartily for about five minutes, and hoped it would never be his painful duty to flog me.

The next communication made to me was that Mr. Easy had, with my uncle's approval, invited me to Farnham Cobb, and that I was forthwith to get myself ready for a drive to that charming locality.

CHAPTER III. *

THE COAL COUNTRY.

MONKTON went only twice to Farnham Cobb, though he obtained like me a general invitation to visit the College. He disdained little Tabitha Easy, thought the Reverend Solomon Easy a "slow coach," and (notwithstanding frequent and regular arrivals of badgers at the "school," directed by the hand of Mrs. Skettle, the house-keeper at Farnham Cobb College) maintained that my strangely-found acquaintance was after

all no "very particular find." Of Mrs. Skettle he used to speak in the most disrespectful manner, calling her "Old Mother Nightcap," and "Old Mrs. Brown Dumpling." Monkton was such a capital fellow in all other respects that I knew how to construe his conduct on this point. He honorably regarded Farnham Cobb as "my find." Indeed he once spoke of the College as "Julian's preserve;" and he in his usual fine-spirited way resolved not to poach on my property. And then, to disguise his generous purpose, he put on a lot of supercilious contempt for "ugly little chits" and "frumpy old women."

As for me, I became warmly attached to my friends at Farnham Cobb; and, when Monkton went off to India, "the College" became almost as much my home as Beechey. Tibby and I were just of one age. So in the holidays we were always together. In all little matters we had no secrets from each other. In close league we read, played, birdsneste, made fire-works, fished, hunted rats, and were up to all sorts of mischief. Indeed, we did every thing that boy and girl could with propriety do, except fall in love with each other.

To love little Tibby never entered my head in those days as possible for me or any other human creature. She was very ugly as well as small. Of that there was no doubt. When Monkton told me she was "an ugly little chit," I could only respond with a sarcasm to the effect that he "wasn't so wonderfully good-looking as one could see he thought himself." White-faced, diminutive, with a large mouth, and eyes not set quite straight in her head, she was a queer little object when I first beheld her. As she grew toward womanhood her eyes came right, as far as position was concerned, and the misproportion of her mouth to the rest of her face disappeared; but she was still plain. On returning home from Bridgeham School she was delicately neat in her costume, had a slight and piquant figure, small white hands, and a countenance that, for expressing sheer amiability and quick intelligence, beat all countenances I had ever seen then and have ever seen since. But all the same for that, she was decidedly plain. Nothing could alter that. Her brown eyebrows had a few white hairs in them, and her eyes, when she was excited, had a strange uncertainty of color that at times was uncomfortable to regard.

As a little girl she was to me all that a school-boy would nowadays designate as "a brick of a girl." On reaching womanhood she fulfilled my "ideal" of goodness. I write this gravely and with deliberation. She will read it and learn nothing new from it, for she is well aware in what estimation I ever held and still hold her. I never knew any one so habitually cheerful and considerate of other persons' feelings. She was the most thoroughly unselfish girl that ever breathed.

Why then did I not, as a school-boy, fall in love with her?

Simply because she hadn't beauty. It was part of my constitution to overvalue physical loveliness. The same defect of judgment, although I well know it to be a grave source of error, still influences me. I never look from under my iron-gray curls and through the crow's-foot pucker of my eyelids at a pretty woman

without immediately setting her down as a good woman, and romancing about her accordingly. If I had known Tibby less intimately, the converse of this sentiment would doubtless have held sway over the poetry of my life, and I should have construed an absence of beauty as an absence of virtue, and have seen in physical deformity the outward clothing of a feeble or vicious nature. Tibby, however, saved me from this mistake. Whenever, as a young man, I saw plain women, and (owing to the fault of my nature) was on the point of judging them uncharitably or unjustly, I remembered my old playmate Tibby, and saved myself from making a mistake.

Still I didn't fall in love with Tibby Tree when I was a school-boy, as I unquestionably should have done had she been pretty.

I did not lose my heart till I was seventeen years old, and then I was a school-boy no longer.

At the close of my sixteenth year my rich uncle in London settled my vocation in life. A friend of his in the North had a mining connection, and persuaded him that the best field open to a poor lad, with his way to make for himself in the world, and anxious to acquire wealth, was the vocation of a viewer or superintendent of the operations connected with the interior working of mines. My rich uncle's friend was not very wrong. From time immemorial mining engineers had been either self-taught, or else altogether ignorant men. The body, of whom Trevithick was one, of course comprised men of intellect and wonderful ingenuity; but in too many cases the Cornish "captain" and the Northumbrian "viewer" were stupid blockheads, through whose inefficiency speculators lost annually a prodigious amount of money. The time had come for a superior class of mining agents—men of education, familiar with the recent discoveries in chemistry and geology, as well as acquainted with the purely practical part of their business.

My uncle therefore wrote me a brief note, announcing that at the end of the next three months he proposed apprenticing me to Mr. Clout, a mine viewer near Newcastle.

I can not say the announcement altogether pleased me. The son of an officer in the Indian army, and with a brother in the same service, I had hoped that a more gentlemanly career would be proposed to me. In fact, I deemed the vocation beneath my rank. Such folly, I trust, may be pardoned in a boy.

My uncle was firm. His plan was to be acceded to, or his countenance would be forfeited. For such a pursuit he would forward the money required for the premium, and also would make me such an allowance that I should be able to live and learn, until I should be able to live by my own work. For any other object he would aid me neither with counsel nor a five-pound note.

In short, it was the only opening offered me, for my honest uncle, the farmer at Beechey, could do nothing for me. His purse was, like his heart, open to me; but unlike his heart, there was nothing of value in it. His farm was poor in quality and high in rent, just such an occupation as the application of abundant capital alone could turn to profit; and he, kind man, had year after year to borrow from the bank the

money he needed to get his harvest in. I found out that this was the case just as my Uncle Gower made me his offer. I need not say that the discovery gave me another inducement to accept that offer. I hoped to save a little from my rich uncle's allowance to repay my maternal uncle at Beechey some of the money his hospitality to me and my brother had taken from his needy exchequer. It is a source of lively gratification to me to reflect that this hope was fulfilled, and that, aided by Monkton, who sent me an annual slice of his pay, I managed to make the last years of my dear uncle's life as comfortable as ever they had been; in fact, to keep him in the farm at Beechey till the day of his death.

I was fortunate in being allowed a clear month's holiday every year during my apprenticeship. This month I devoted to a trip to the "corn country." The expenses of the journey made a great hole into my income, but it was the only expense I indulged in for purely personal gratification. In dress, clothing, and living I was economical even to parsimony. Even a glass of beer or "yell," as they call it in the Northern coal field, was a rarely permitted luxury in my diet.

At first my Northumberland experiences were in cruel contrast to my previous habits. Liking country sports and country scenery, I had to consume the freshness of my days in dark coal mines. Trim and fastidious as to personal cleanliness and to costume, I had daily to dress myself like a ragged ruffian, and spend hours in the slush and grime and distressing atmosphere of the subterranean fields. As for society, I had for years literally none, save that of pitmen, engine-wrights, and clerks. The work also, separated from its surrounding conditions, was not to my taste. It was drudgery and nothing else. At first I couldn't get on with the pitmen, whom I was naturally anxious to attach to me. They suspected me of incompetence and namable qualities, because I was "from the South." In short, I had a hard life of it.

But amidst all my trials there was one bright point. I could look forward to my next "month's visit" in the autumn to "the corn country." I had another source of happiness, and let me gratefully acknowledge it. Dear Tibby wrote to me regularly—such letters, such pictures of domestic humor and gossip and felicity, as I don't believe any other woman ever penned! No wonder that "the corn country" and all pertaining to it—the old school at Laughton, the old farm at Beechey, the old houses at Farnham Cobb, the old faces that turned loving eyes on my boyhood—had for me singular fascinations. I don't profess to be a man of fine feelings; I am a banker, and a member of Parliament. I am no poet. "I am a practical man, and no idealist," as they nowadays term it in magazines; but I do thank God with hearty gratitude that in the days when I toiled in the black dust and the black mud of the coal field I could not think of "the corn country"—of "home," as I used to call it—without being inclined to put my grimed coat-cuffs up to my eyes.

It was in my first autumn visit to "the corn country" after the commencement of my apprenticeship that I fell in love. I had come down *via* London, where I spent six hours in walking

to look at Apsley House (in those days I never visited London without indulging myself with a look at the outside of "the Duke's" town residence), and visiting my relations in Russell Square. My aunt was "not at home," but I saw my uncle, who expressed a wish that I should "leave a card" on his wife whenever I was in town. Of course I scrupulously attended to his request. I had my name engraved on a plate of copper, and had fifty impressions struck off, for the sole purpose of obeying him. I thought that his pecuniary assistance to me demanded that I should obey him. So I spent a few shillings on the purchase of my first calling cards. In the course of the next four years I managed to dispose of ten out of my fifty cards. One I gave to Tibby as a curiosity. The other nine I left in Russell Square. The remaining forty I have by me at the present day.

I never needed to leave a card in "the corn country." My friends there were always "at home."

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST LOVE.

As I have said once or twice before, I fell in love when I was seventeen years old.

I can not exactly account for it.

I think the singing of birds in certain walnut-trees, the playing of a southern breeze over a bed of roses, and the fierce autumn sun bearing down on a brick wall covered with green-gages and nectarines, had something to do with it. Any how, immediately before I fell in love with the Rev. Solomon Easy's grand-daughter I had spent two hours in the garden of Farnham Cobb College.

I was so young that of course I kept my folly to myself; and she was so young that it would have been simply preposterous to have hinted the state of my feelings—I should rather say, the freak of my imagination—to her. And under the circumstances it would have been gross indelicacy to talk about my hopes to any one else. I therefore kept my own counsel—almost entirely for seven long years, and altogether for five years—without a hint to any mortal living.

With a delight, and an awe, and an anxiety I nursed my secret, gazing at it in the dark caverns of the coal country, and fearfully speculating on it as a possibility of a brighter future. The prospect—in the far distance, separated from me though it was by years of repulsive toil and bitter mortification—which my secret held out to me saved me from despondency and sin. It was (of course) a mere boyish sentiment, a dream, an absurd fancy, a ridiculous nothing; but it reconciled me to a hard lot, saved me from the baneful influences of a youth of disappointment, kept my heart fresh, and preserved my young life from the defilement of unholy pleasures. This was something for "a mere boyish sentiment" to accomplish! In these wise days, when wisdom comes to men before they get their beards, and leaves them just as they are cutting their first gray hairs, I often hear grave philosophers of five-and-twenty laugh at the folly of early marriages, and the madness of those who care heartily for any thing that may not be converted into the Three per Cents. But I always

bluntly tell them, "Boys, I like the fashion of 'the good old time,' and if I had my life over again I would do exactly as I did years back. I would fall in love at seventeen, even if I could not hope to marry till I was forty."

On finishing my apprenticeship I obtained an engagement as an under-viewer in the Shorton mines—a property belonging to Mr. Martin Orger, the great Northumbrian capitalist. The work of the post was heavy, but the wages were considerable, and Mr. Martin Orger had helped so many of his efficient servants to higher appointments and affluence, that like a sanguine youth I regarded my "first engagement" as a decided step on the road to fortune.

Under these circumstances I could not resist the temptation to communicate a hint of my secret to Tibby, just to see if I was secure of her sympathy. Being, therefore, in "the corn country" for a few weeks previous to taking up my abode at Shorton, I vaguely sketched out the sort of future to which my day-dreams pointed. The interview in which I did this occurred in the gardens of Lymm Hall—an old moated hall, which several generations of the Easy family had possessed.

From that day I found great pleasure in renewing my hints and cautious intimations to Tibby. At Lymm Hall, I know, I resolved never again for years to allude to the subject; and I remember enjoining Tibby that she should not induce me to speak more fully to her till I was a richer man. But I could not act on this prudent decision. The letters I wrote to Tibby on my return to the North were all more or less colored by the partial disclosure I had made to her. My pen like my thoughts would persist in running to the forbidden topic. Of course I did not throw aside all caution or reserve, for I felt it would be unkind and selfish and dishonorable to lead Tibby to commit herself to my plans, and to place her hopes upon them, when I had no sufficient grounds of confidence that I should be able to carry them out. In my romantic epistles, therefore, I always confined myself to *general* expressions, and never put the names of individuals into the imaginary sketches of my pen.

At the end of my first year at Shorton I made a flying visit into "the corn country," not even stopping in London to leave a card on my aunt. I slept only three nights at Beechey, and spent only three days at Farnham Cobb; but they were happy days—very happy ones. My old friends were delighted to see me. Ety was the most altered. Almost seventeen, and fast advancing to the full perfection of her matchless beauty, she was the loveliest creature that I *had* ever seen—that I *have* ever seen. The braids and curls and folds of her golden hair were richer, finer, more glossy than ever. Her slight, airy figure, whether she remained still or moved, was the language of grace; to look at it made me feel as if I listened to music. Her eyebrows, always of a richer color than her hair, had grown yet darker, and were very soft and thick, and her soft blue eyes looked through long lashes. At every turn made by her head upon the slender neck on which it was set, I saw a different curve—of lip, of cheek, of chin, of brow—and every succeeding curve seemed more beautiful than those exhibited before. She was not a beauty of one smile, but of a hundred smiles, all differing in

character, but equal in their power to delight. I would talk of her little mouth, with its short and sharply-curved upper lip, her small white hands, and her tiny feet; but I may not catalogue her charms, and put them into an inventory, as if they were articles of furniture.

I was very near telling her my secret, even more plainly than I had told it to Tibby; for I was of course not less desirous to get her approval to my plan than I had been to win her sister's, of which I by this time felt secure.

But I thought it wiser to defer the revelation.

So without speaking about my secret I returned once more to the coal country, where a strange adventure awaited me.

CHAPTER V.

PETER M'CABE.

EVERY other Saturday, on pay-days, it was my custom to walk into Newcastle from Shorton. Sometimes I had business connected with Mr. Orger's mines to transact in "the canny town;" but even when business did not necessitate my making the visit, inclination led me to Tyneside. The eight miles' walk was an agreeable change, reminding me of my frequent pedestrian excursions between Beechey and Farnham Cobb, although the black dust of the Northumbrian roads bore small resemblance to the clean, bright lanes of "the corn country." It was also a pleasant diversion to me, having no altogether congenial associates with whom I could mix on terms of intimacy, to watch the busy crowds of pitmen and work-people doing their marketing, and enjoying their holiday in the picturesque and precipitous streets of the "old town," and in the imposing thoroughfares of the "new town." The shops were always brilliantly illuminated on "pay-nights," and their glaring light enlivened me after a fortnight of gloomy pitwork. Moreover, the surrounding buzz and brightness had the effect of enabling me, as I strolled up and down the pavements, to call up vivid pictures of life in Farnham Cobb College.

Dusk was rapidly deepening into darkness, on one of these occasions, at the end of my engagement at Shorton, when I was standing near the old town-hall, amusing myself with watching the Cullereots fisherwomen, as they wrangled over the close of their day's work, and watching the ships on the river, which is now spanned by Robert Stephenson's splendid high-level bridge, when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and a voice said,

"Maister Gower, will ye gang hame wi' me?"

At that moment I happened to be reflecting on the mere luck, as some would call it, that led to my intimacy with Mr. Easy. Perhaps this circumstance added to the expression of surprise in my countenance and delayed my answer.

"Ay, lod—nae offense, Ar hope," said the elderly gentleman who owned the voice.

"Indeed no, Mr. M'Cabe," I answered, raising my hat. "I shall be delighted to accompany you; and if I did not accept your invitation at once, the reason was that I was too much surprised."

"Ye hae na mony frins?" rejoined Mr. M'Cabe, divining one cause of my astonishment.

"Not many—indeed hardly any in the North."

"Ay, ye cam fra the Sooth; but niver mind—ye canna help thot. It was jist ye'er father's misdeed."

"And at the very instant that you touched me I was reflecting that one of the best and dearest friends I have in the world I first knew through his accosting me in a public street, without any introduction, as you have just done—and offering me kindness, as you have also just done."

"Thot's a vara strange coevidence," returned Mr. M'Cabe; "but gie us ye'er arm, an' let us gang oop toon."

I had never spoken to Mr. Peter M'Cabe before, but I knew him very well by repute as the inventor of several mechanical contrivances for carrying out mining operations, and as a man of great wealth. Thirty years ago no man stood higher in Newcastle than Peter M'Cabe. He had in early life raised himself in a coal-pit from the lowest to the highest grade of the mining craft. A Northumbrian distich runs,

"Trapper, Traumer, Hewer,
Under-overman, and then Viewer."

Years back Mr. M'Cabe had discharged all these offices; and then giving up his business as viewer, and turning merchant, he had risen to be one of the leading capitalists of Newcastle. He was, moreover, a popular man—not the less so because he was known to be rich, and was a bachelor without children.

"Ye can stap the nicht, ay?" was Mr. M'Cabe's first question, after I had taken a seat in his dining-room, in the principal terrace of the new town, at a table furnished with materials for a "substantial tea."

I hesitated.

"Hoot mon—Ar's got the bed ready for ye."

"Got the bed ready for me?" I rejoined with surprise.

"Ay, an' ye dinna need to stare at me i' thot way," responded my host, with a smile of exultation at his sagacity. "'Twas but this morning Ar told my hoosekeeper to get the spare room ready for ye. The Shorton mines dinna need ye thae nicht. Sac sleep here, for Ar hae settled to mak' ye'er acquaintance."

"I am obliged to you, Sir—and I shall enjoy stopping," I replied, beginning to suspect that my entertainer had some object beyond a desire to display his hospitality in seeking me out.

"Thot's guid," remarked Mr. M'Cabe, laying a strong emphasis on "guid," and then deliberately continuing his explanations. "Ye see Ar's talked to Clay about ye, an' Ar hear ye'er a bra' lod, bent on doing weel in the warrld. He wad hae sent ye to me, but Ar said Ar knew Ar could fin ye i' pay-night wi'out trooblin' him. An' ye see my wark is joost as guid as my promise. An' ye dootless needna be toold thot Ar hae na brocht ye here for naething."

Mr. M'Cabe paused—I bowed.

"Ye see," continued my host, "I hae joost a prappoosetion to lay before ye."

"I shall be most happy to hear it, Sir."

"Nae, nae—niver be in sic a hurry. We're nae at the quay noo. Let's hae a drap o' whaskey with a vara leetle hot water in it, and than we'll converse."

Of course I complied.

We had tea; and the table being refurnished with the apparatus for drinking, Peter M'Cabe

mixed himself a stiff tumbler of hot whisky toddy, and passing the spirit bottle over to me, left me to mix for myself. I need not say that I availed myself of the advantages of my position to put a very liberal proportion of water and a very modest allowance of "whisky" into my glass.

Shrewdness and benevolence I knew were among Peter M'Cabe's characteristics; and it soon became manifest to me that self-esteem and egotism, of the least offensive kind, were also to be numbered among his prominent qualities.

"Ye see, my lod," he said, toward the end of his second tumbler of 'whisky,' with 'vara leetle water in it'—"ye see, my lod, Ar's a self-made mon, tho't's wot Ar am. Ar made my ain fortunes, sic as they are; an' noo as Ar walk doon Pilgrim Street to Quay-side, the lods whasper to ain anither as Ar pass, 'Heeh, mon, there's Peter M'Cabe wi' a hoonder thoosan in his pooch!' An' that's what not mony o' the New-Cassel lods can say o' theisel."

Having mixed a third tumbler, certainly not less stiff than its precursors, Peter M'Cabe smoothed his gray locks with his hands, and having composed his comely face before a mirror, sat down once more and resumed the story of his early rise and present greatness.

"Ar had nae eddication when Ar was a lod. On coomng to be a mon, Ar tocht mysel spellin' an' writin', but eddication Ar had nane. Not a penny did my eddication cost my father, when Ar rin about the pit-moath at Callerton as bare-legged as iver Natur made a bairn. An' Ar've done vara weel wi'oot eddication. Ar mak' noo vara grand opeenion o' them as ar eddicated. Pot afore me an eddicated mon an' an oneddicated mon, an' the deference atween the twa 'll be, that the oneddicated mon 'll be doosed sieht cooter, an' hae a doosed sieht mair i' his noddle than the eddicated mon. Nae, my lod, tak the warld thro', an' Ar hae nae opeenion whativ'er o' any mon but what is oneddicated. But that I say betwixt ye an' mysel."

As I knew Peter M'Cabe had an amount of information and book-learning that could only be the result of strenuous efforts on his part to make up by self-culture for the defects of early education, I was not much troubled how to estimate his eulogy on the advantages of being untaught. It had already become apparent to me that whatever Peter M'Cabe had endured, seen, or contended with, it was best, in his opinion, for human nature that every man should in like manner experience and encounter—in short, that Peter M'Cabe was "the grandest mon i' a New-Cassel," and therefore those were next best who in extraction and vicissitudes most nearly resembled him.

"Nae," continued Peter, "Ar sair meestrust a' eddicated people. Ar was what ye ca' i' the South an eellegeetimate chiel. Ar was a miscome bairn. Noo, mony a mon with a noddle shaped like a sparrow's or an ould tom-cat's wad blush to confess himsel ony sic thin as a bairn wi'oot an honest mither. But Ar hae nae sic weakness. All the cootest an' strangest men Ar've met in a' my days hae been eellegeetimate, wi'oot ony exception. In fact, my lad, betwixt ye an' mysel Ar hae nae grand opeenion o' ony mon but what is eellegeetimate."

I began to fear that Peter M'Cabe would fin-

ish up by telling me that he had no good opinion of me, as I had neither the recommendation of illegitimate birth nor that of total want of education.

He did not, however, make so personal an application of his doctrines. Notwithstanding his extravagant crotchets I felt drawn by kindly feelings to my new acquaintance. It's a belief of mine that the voice is a much more faithful and trust-worthy indicator of character than either feature, figure, expression of countenance, or bearing. I have had dealings with a great variety of men, and in my various undertakings I have not escaped the clutches of knaves and rascals. I do not blush to acknowledge that a few times in my life I have been completely taken in—thoroughly bamboozled. But whenever the quality of a person's voice has said to me, "Trust the man who owns me," or "Be suspicious of the man who owns me," I have never found the warning a false one. Now Peter M'Cabe's voice was that of a kindly and thoroughly honest man; it was a soft, drowsy, chuckling, happy voice.

"Ye'er time at Shorton will be oop in sax weeks frae this pay-nicht," observed Peter, looking into the bottom of his fourth tumbler with sober but twinkling eyes.

"My engagement will terminate then. But I think I may say that if I wish to continue there I need not fear any difficulty in renewing my engagement."

"Heeh—an' why so?" put in Peter, sharply.

"Because I have discharged my duties to the best of my ability, and I believe I enjoy the approval of Mr. Clay."

"Because ye've discharged your duties to the best o' ye'er abeility," replied Peter, deliberately repeating my words with a shrewd sarcastic emphasis. "Noo, I'll joost tell 'ee. Ye wad hae me to onderstond that ye hae said, 'My abeilities are vara far fra ordinaire, an' Mr. Clay an' Mr. Martin Orger wad fine it nae easy thing to get an under-viewer like me.'"

"Indeed, Mr. M'Cabe, I would say no such thing."

"O' coorse ye wadna, an' o' coorse ye didna. Ye pot it in a mair modest manner. An' ye do richt well to be modest; but oh, my lod, dinna be o'ermodest, dinna be o'ermodest. Modesty is a sweet, plaisant vairin in a yong mon—vara agreeable to the elders he eats an' drinks wi'—bot ye may hae too muckle on it, an' too gret a quantity o' modesty has been the downfa' o' mony a bra' lod. But noo ye wad be liking to hear what the prappoosection may be I spoke on but joost noo."

I brightened up.

"Noo," continued Peter, brightening up also at the sight of my expression of lively interest—"wad it na' be a bonny jest if Ar was to tell 'ee after a' that I hae nae prappoosection whativ'er to mak' to ye?"

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEXT DAY.

HAVING had his joke, Peter M'Cabe proceeded to "mak' a prappoosection" to me. When he had finished making it he lighted the bedroom candles, and conducted me to the door of

my sleeping apartment, where he bade me good-night.

The sound sleep that Peter hospitably wished me on moving off for his own pillow was a simple impossibility to one who had only just been made the recipient of a proposal which, if he decided to shape his conduct by it, would altogether change his present course, and in all probability influence his career throughout life. For hours I lay awake, calculating the chances of the future, and regarding them all in reference to my "corn country" secret. Toward dawn I got a brief period of slumber, but it was so light a sleep that the rattling of a carriage under my window broke it, and presented me with the Irishman's assurance that it was "next day."

Rising and dressing, I descended the staircase of Mr. McCabe's house, and, drawing the bolts of the hall door, I let myself out in the street. No one was stirring in the town, and the quiet of the Sunday dawn and the freshness of the breeze made me congratulate myself on having quitted my bed; and a walk of an hour's duration over the leazes and the Town Moor, on the dewy grass and amidst the sweet breath of the freemen's cows, gave me more composure and refreshment than I should have gained from a prolonged occupation of my restless bed.

Peter McCabe had informed me that his breakfast-hour was half past seven o'clock. So I regulated my steps in such a manner that I was back again at his door by six o'clock. As I put my foot on the door-step I looked up the terrace, and found that he was "stirring"—taking a breath of fresh air on the pavement, which he paced up and down in a meditative humor.

"Heeh—an' hoo did ye sleep?" was his first question.

"Not very well, Sir," I answered, bidding him good-morning. "I had too much to think about."

"Aha!" he rejoined, with a twinkle of satisfaction in his eyes, "Ar thoet ye wadna sleep anyhow but puirly. Ar thoet ye wad hae enoo to do in turning aboot my prapoosection?"

We took two or three turns up and down the sunny pavement in silence—my companion lapsing into his meditative mood, and I being in no temper to originate conversation.

The servant-girls were by this time busy in the areas of the houses sweeping and cleaning, and making courtesies as we passed. Newcastle servants are not lavish of their politeness; but Peter McCabe was the popular resident in the terrace, and would, in his more social moods, respond to their obeisances with such exclamations as "A breet mornin'," or "Thankye, my hinnie," or "It'll nae be lang eer a yonger lad than Peter McCabe maks his boo to ye." On the present occasion he was too absorbed for urbanity, and only expressed his satisfaction with the attention offered him by saying to me in an under-tone as he turned into his house, "They're a' bonny lasses. Ar niver knew a lass that wasna bonny somehow or another."

Entering the hall of his residence, he paused at the large oak table that was its principal piece of furniture, and pointing to a pile of old musty folios, in ancient leather binding, stacked on the table, intimated that he wished me to look at them.

"They're a bonny lot of buiks, beant 'ee?"

I opened the topmost folio of the pile, and found, to my surprise, that it was a copy of Xenophon's works.

"Where did you get them, Sir?"

"Oh, frae the market. It's vara heavy buik, isna' it?" he asked, taking the ponderous tome in his hands, and testing its weight by swaying it up and down as if it were a baby. "I bocht joost twa hoonderweight, an odd lot joost for foornitur, but I wad like to knoo what they are. Noo, what d'ye ca' the buik?"

"It's a Xenophon, Sir," I replied, gladly availing myself of my slender classical attainments.

"Ye dinna say so?" answered Peter McCabe, with a movement of lively astonishment. "A Xaynophon! Ye dinna say so? The Laird proteet us! Who'd ha thoet o' that? A Xaynophon! An' noo, if it beant too gret a thing to ask ye, my lad—what is a Xaynophon?"

I explained that Xenophon was a very distinguished man in his day—a historian of renown—whose works, written in Greek, then lay before me.

"Weel noo," said Peter McCabe, evidently deeply impressed by my erudition, "what ye say is sic remarkable an' exclusive information that I wad like, if ye hae nae objaiction, to mak' a note o' it."

Seeing that my host suspected I might not like to lose my peculiar property in "sic remarkable an' exclusive information," I hastened to disabuse him of any such feeling; when he, on being assured that he might "mak' a note o' it," took a pencil from his pocket and wrote in large round hand, on the fly-leaf of his new acquisition, the words "Greek," "Historian," "Xenophon"—the words being placed one above another, and the last word being (as a singular mystery of scholarship) spelled according to my express directions.

The other volumes were passed in review. Four folios of ragged County Histories, two of Clarendon's History of the Great Rebellion, a stray volume of the Biographia Britannica, a collection of Traets, and Johnson's Dictionary, were the principal items of the lot, till I came to the last and the largest "buik" of the entire collection.

"There," said Peter, with manifest pride, and a simplicity that was perfectly childish, "that is the vara biggest, and wi'oot any exception the bonniest buik I iver clapt my sight on in a' my days."

On inspection I ascertained that the folio so highly praised was an old edition of the Greek Testament. On my imparting this fact to the owner of the volume surprise and delight filled his face with radiance, and almost sent his eyes out of his head. I am not exaggerating when I say that I never saw a man appear more pleased.

"Maister Gower—be quick—that's the Scripturs in the original?"

"A part of them, Sir."

"Heeh! to think o' it! Ar was snre 'twere a vara remarkable buik. Joost to fauey it! The Scripturs in the original! The vara buik itse! Noo, my lod, dinna tell a mon i' the toon that Ar hae it. Ye mauna spread the news, or there'll joost be oonders o' greedy fellows after it; but not ane o' 'em shall hae it."

Of course very careful notes had to be made

of this treasure. At my dictation, Peter M'Cabe wrote on the title-page "Greek Testament," and at the commencement of each separate book he wrote "Beginning of Matthew," "Beginning of Mark," and so on till we came to Revelation.

When the notes were completed, Peter M'Cabe shut the volume, and said, in a low voice, "This bnik is a gret acquisition, and I'm richt thankfu' for it. Ar's a siufu' mon, and my hairs are fast growing white, and Ar feel it i' the mornings, as I didna years syne, when Ar hae been o'er indulgent wi' whasky o'er nicht. Sae Ar'll keep the buik to mysel' in my ain strang chest, and say nocht aboot it to mortal man; and I hae nae doot it'll do me good, body and saul."

As he uttered these words he dusted the moth-eaten covers of the folio with pious care, and having finished the sentence he lifted up the volume with both hands, as if he meditated bearing it off to his strong chest without delay. Then another thought struck him, and he looked at me wishfully—as though he contemplated making a further demand on my scholarship, but out of motives of delicacy hesitated to do so.

"Noo, my lod, it's a vara strange fancy, but it wad delight me vara much to hear ye read a chapter in the original, joost as it war i' the beginning. Ar shouldna onderstond it, but still it wad gie me pleasure. We're ganging to have a bird or twa for breakfast, an' Ar will na hae 'em oop t' th' table for half an hour, if you'll but read me a chapter."

Of course refusal was out of the question. So the birds were ordered for half an hour later, and entering the breakfast-room I and Peter M'Cabe commenced our theological labors. He sat on one side of the fire-place in an easy chair, all attention, holding up his hands in mute astonishment, and swaying his head to and fro, while I, occupying another chair at the opposite end of the hearth-rug, read aloud the first chapter of St. John's Gospel.

When I had read about ten verses, I paused to see if my auditor had not had enough of it.

"Hoot mon," he cried, throwing his right hand out energetically, "gang on. 'Tis nae a'. Let's hae it a'. Gie me fu' measure, rinnin' o'er. A bargain's a bargain—gie me a'."

So I went on steadily to the end of the chapter. When I had finished, my host gave utterance to his opinion that he had had "a vara bonny preach—a vara bonny preach, and vara suitable for the Laird's ain day." Having repeated this criticism about a score times he rose and rang the bell for the birds and the hot tea and coffee.

"Ar canna," he said, at the close of breakfast, reverting to his novel entertainment, "bot pot it amang the maist extraordinare events o' my life, that Peter M'Cabe, an celligestimate and wholly onedicated lod, should live to hear the Scriptures read i' th' original—to hae the original in his ain keeping, bot in a chance lot of ould bniks i' th' New-Cassel market—an', mare-over, to hae the original read to him by a lod who is himsel naethin gretter than th' under-viewer o' Shorton mines. Maister Gower—Maister Gower—there are far mair wonderfu' things than Trevittie's iron dragon to think aboot, if we did bot know where i' th' airth to look for 'em."

After breakfast Peter, having first carried to

its appointed place of confinement his "Scripturs i' th' original," drove me out sixteen miles in his gig to dine with a friend—a landed proprietor of small estate, about eight miles from Shorton. The drive was one of amusement and profit, for Peter confided to me, in his characteristic vein of self-complacent shrewdness, all the principal vicissitudes, difficulties, and triumphs of his career. The achievement that "made him a man," as he expressed it, was the ventilation of a valuable mine in North America from which human labor had been driven by a series of awful explosions, and by the apparent impossibility of dissipating its noxious gases. After trying numerous futile experiments for the recovery of their property, the owners of the mine determined as a last resource to get the assistance of a Northumbrian mine-viewer. The immediate result of their decision was that Peter M'Cabe undertook to serve them, on the agreement that they should pay him all his expenses of journeying to and from America, and of living in America for six months, and that if within the said six months he should "cure the mine," he should be put in possession of a certain number of shares in the property, and £10,000 in cash. A poor but sagacious man, Peter made his voyage of adventure, expecting to spend six months on the other side of the Atlantic. By the end of the third month after landing in the States he started on his homeward voyage to Liverpool, victorious and a man of wealth.

Such was the substance of a story which, as Peter M'Cabe told it, was an admirable romance. Coming as it did to me from the lips of the adventurer himself, who had only the night before made me a "prappoosection," the narrative had peculiar force.

The gentleman to whose house Peter took me—an old, broken-down, illiterate, and battered Northumbrian Squire—was little to my taste; and as soon as I could do so with propriety I rose from the table where we three had had our mid-day dinner and took my leave, on the plea that it was necessary for me to walk home to Shorton.

"Than, Maister Gower," said Mr. M'Cabe, dryly, and in a business-like manner, as I was departing, "ye'll gie me ye'er answer by the end o' the week."

"Yes, Sir," I answered.

"Ganging, mon?" put in Mr. Tilot, the Squire. "Ganging? Nae, nae, stap an' hae mair wine, an' by the time the sun gangs doon we'll hae the hat water an' the whasky on the table."

I declined to profit by this hospitable suggestion.

"Ay, lod," said Peter, gravely, and with some pathos, filling up his glass as he spoke, "dinna tak to drink. Its o'er airly for ye to be raisin' ye'er finger to ye'er lip. Ye're yong an' bra'—fu' of health an' hope. Dinna tak to drinking till ye're ould. A mon wi' white hairs on his noddle can hae naething better to do."

"The Shorton mines yield weel?" asked the Squire, thinking he might get a little more gossip out of me.

I assented.

"Ay, ay," the Squire rejoined, "reeches mak' reeches. Martin Orger is a reech mon; and a'

his kin are vara reech. Joost noo he's got his heirsch niece wi' 'em, a bonny lass with twice twa hoonder thoosan' in her hand. Only to think o' it!"

"Indeed?" said I, asking a question in my turn, for though I was one of Mr. Martin Orger's servants, I knew so little of him and his family history that I had not even heard he had a rich niece. "Who is she?"

"Hech, dinna ye know Miss Olive Blake? Bot nae wonder—for she's niver been here before; she was born an' bred i' the Sooth, an' what's o' mair importance still, 'tis i' th' Sooth that she'll tak her man. She's joost the ainly bairn o' the banker Blake—Blake an' Petersham—ye've heard the names. Her father's dead, an' willy-nilly she maun wed ould Petersham's ainly son. That's hoo to keep the money thegither! That's hoo to graze ye'er ain sheep an' kill ye'er ain mutton, as ye say i' th' Sooth. Ha! ha! an' they tell me, wi' a' her money, she cares mair for paintin' a lot o' pieties, an' scribbling a lot o' buiks, than for aught else! Ha! ha!"

Neither Mr. Tilcot's wit, nor his laughter at it, were sufficiently pleasant to induce me to prolong my visit, so I bade him another farewell, and was soon striding over Fenton Moor, in the direction of Shorton, as the dusk of evening fell around me.

CHAPTER VII.

AN OPENING IN LIFE.

SHOULD I agree to leave my country for five long years and endure the heat of a tropical climate, and run all the risks comprised in such endurance? On the one side, I might, if the "Mariquita and Pamplona Mining Company" answered the expectations of its most sanguine promoters, return a rich man at the end of the above-mentioned period, with an interest in a vast source of wealth that would enable me to take my place among the opulent of my opulent country. On the other hand, I might fall in the bold venture; death might come to me by fever, exhaustion, anxiety, or the bullet of a thief. Well! did not every year see thousands of hopeful men drop in the pursuits of ambition? why should I not add myself to their number? There was also the medium between these two extremes—no enormous fortune won at the end of five years but this reward—honorable and instructive employment for five years; employment that would assuredly lead to something else; and an income for five years large enough to admit of my helping my uncle at Beechey more liberally, and also of my laying by a comfortable sum, say a solid £100 per annum, as a fund for future operations.

Such were the principal questions I asked myself as I strode back toward Shorton. Such were the first considerations suggested by Peter McCabe's "prappoosection" to send me out as principal Mining Engineer to the recently-formed "Mariquita and Pamplona Mining Company." I was then a few weeks more than four-and-twenty years of age, and regarded the whole subject from the point of view which that age would be most likely to take. Need I say that I took the hopeful aspect of all the points of the

case? that the risks and disadvantages of the appointment seemed much less, while its emoluments, dignity, privileges, and probable beneficial results appeared much greater than they really were?

By degrees all the gloomy features of my life's prospect vanished. The chances of early death, of a constitution prematurely destroyed, of broken ties, and all the grounds of apprehension or caution disappeared, leaving before my mental vision nothing save the picture of a bronzed but vigorous young man who, having returned from distant lands, was standing in Farnham Cobb Church with the girl of his heart beside him, and the Reverend Solomon Easy, venerable with more than fourscore years, converting them twain into one. My blood was singing in the tips of my fingers, and the muscles of my limbs were causing me to shoot over Fenton Moor at racing speed, as my imagination was busy filling up the outline of this picture, when I was arrested in my course by a voice saying,

"I am fairly vanquished, and you must take me home."

I turned, and in the dim light of the dusk and the soft light of the rising moon I saw distinctly a lady, young, well-looking, richly dressed, and evidently of the higher rank of life. I was walking so fast at the time she spoke, that sheer impetus carried me two or three paces beyond her ere I pulled up, and took off my hat in courtesy to her.

"Come, you have stopped yourself at last," she said, with a light laugh; "that's lucky. I called to you twice before you heard me, and at last I almost screamed. Then you heard me. Of course you were not deaf to my cry of distress. Now, whatever you are after, you must help me. This is my case: I started out by myself—slipped out of my uncle's house without even one of the servants seeing me, in order that I might explore the immediate district, and see for myself, all alone and without a guide, what a pit-village was like. Well, I have been out in the open air for three or four hours; I have completely lost my way; I have not the slightest notion where I am; I am not yet tired, but I soon shall be; and you must take me home."

"I can assure you," I answered, still keeping myself uncovered, "it will delight me to render such a service to you. Where may I have the pleasure of conducting you?"

"Back to my uncle's, of course."

"But, lady, I do not yet know who your uncle is, or where to find him."

She was young and tall, not beautiful—not for an instant to be compared with ETTY TREE in the corn country—but graceful, and with a tone of voice and manner that impressed me with a feeling that she was of a social degree superior to any lady I had ever before spoken with. The absence of entreaty in her style of address, her playful self-possession, and her musical intonations, assured me that she had been educated to look for nothing but delicate consideration from those whom she encountered. In my boyhood, as well as in my later days, I could on first approaching a woman always "feel"—by some process of sensation that it would be impossible for me more minutely to describe—whether or no she had a right to be called "a lady." Well,

I now "felt" that I was talking to "a lady"—a woman who, by birth, education, pursuits, associations, tastes, and aims, had the fullest and most indisputable right to the high, though much-abused, title of "a lady."

"Oh, my uncle lives at Benton Park. My uncle is Mr. Martin Orger," she said, in a tone of slight surprise.

It immediately occurred to me that my companion was the heiress of whom Mr. Tilcot had an hour before spoken.

"Indeed!" I answered, bowing again. "Then you have another reason for commanding me. I am one of your uncle's servants—the resident Superintendent of the Shorton mines."

I described myself thus briefly and frankly, feeling that it was due to her to let her know the exact rank occupied by the person with whom she, my employer's niece, was holding conversation. I, of course, did not see or even speculate how her interview with me could be a source of embarrassment to her; but still I deemed it appropriate to warn her that my social position was very different from hers. Some persons may think I had no business to trouble my head with such considerations; and perhaps they may be right. Of course, had the stranger been a man, I should have made no such explanation; but I then thought (as I do now) that, in his bearing to a lady, a man ought to think in every imaginable way of and for "her feelings," and never waste a moment's care on his own.

Her reply showed that she did not misconstrue my words.

"You don't look much like any man's servant, as you are pleased to term yourself, Mr. Gower; and if I do not read your fortune wrongly, it will not be many years ere you have a place of command assigned you in the division of the world's work. I thank you, however, for condescending to be *my* servant. Allow me to lean on your arm, and let us be walking to Benton. How far distant is it?"

"Rather more than three miles."

"Let us make haste then. There will be an alarm at the hall, for such a great lady as Olive Blake does not take flight from her uncle's roof without sooner or later causing a commotion. You started just now when I mentioned your name; but you by this time remember, I suppose, having seen me before."

"You visited the Shorton mines with Mr. Martin Orger three weeks since?" I rejoined, at the instant recalling that I had seen her soft oval face and brown eyes in the gloom of the Shorton pit.

"To be sure, Mr. Gower," she answered, in a hearty, frank way. "So you see after all we are old friends, and it is not the first time I have trusted to your guidance. I do not, however, wonder at your not recognizing me—I was so cloaked up that day, in the vain hope of defending myself from the coal dust. And I was too busy observing the novel sight to utter three words during the whole inspection. Yours is a terrible business, Mr. Gower—a business of danger and toil, unrelieved by glory. Do you like it?"

"The business is just what you have described it, Miss Blake, and consequently I don't like it. I had a strong distaste for it as a boy, and that distaste has grown to a more positive form of

disapproval. But I continue in it from feelings of duty quite as much as of interest."

"Duty reconciles us to any course that is not positively criminal," she said, leaning with a slight degree more of force on my arm, and looking up into my face as she did so.

"Yes," I answered, "duty reconciles us to circumstances, just in the same way that prudence makes us come to terms with the adversary we can neither conquer nor avoid; but all the same for that, the circumstances are not agreeable to our wishes."

"True; but duty and prudence ought not to be coupled together. The one presides only over vile calculations, the other is the source of human goodness."

She did not say this in a tone of reproof or even of instruction, but with the same simple heartiness with which she had at first addressed me. Now I reflect, I think I remember detecting something of solemnity in her soft voice, but perhaps the presence of after-occurrences in my mind suggests that which was not really the case.

"I fully agree with you, Miss Blake," I answered. "I hope I did not speak lightly."

"You spoke the truth, and it's always good to hear that. A life of duty is not one of pleasure, and it does harm to argue that the case is otherwise. I am glad I have been to visit your wild and harsh country, Mr. Gower; it will give me much to think about."

"It is not *my* country. I was born in the South, and I do not intend to fix myself here permanently."

"Indeed?" she put in, with an expression of interest.

"I am going to South America, as mining engineer to the Mariquita and Pamplona Mining Company," said I, becoming confidential; for I had determined to go to South America, and like a hot-tempered young man I was brimming over with my new enterprise. "It was only late last night that I was offered the post, which will give me an income and a position very different from what I at present enjoy. Perhaps you think I have taken too short a time to make up my mind on so important a point; but all the same for that, I have decided to try my fortunes in Colombia."

"No wonder that you were absorbed when I called to you," she answered, just as a man's own sister under similar circumstances might answer. "I heartily wish you success; and as for the haste of your decision, I don't blame that. Young men must jump at every opening, and not dally—choosing and refusing. Nay, nay, you're right. Of course, as your plan is so novel to you, you'd rather I should not, in recounting my afternoon's adventures, tell my uncle that he is going to lose the under-viewer of the Shorton mines. Of course you'd like to make such a communication yourself, at your own time and in your own terms."

I liked the consideration her words displayed, and I told her so.

"But," she continued, "how will the young lady in the South approve of your plan?"

I was amused—and the expression of my face allowed her to see it.

"No, you are not engaged," was her composed answer to my look of denial and curiosity, "but

you mean to be engaged before you leave the country. There's a girl in the South whom you mean to make your wife. From boyhood you've planned it. While you've been working in the dark gloom of the Northumbrian pits, a vision of a happy future, with her for the queen of your home, has kept hope alive in you and made life comfortable. Your holidays have been spent in visiting her. Your chief object in going to South America is that you may bring back the wealth that will enable you to marry her. Even as I met you on the moor, you were debating how you should make your offer to her."

"Good Heavens, Miss Blake!" I cried, in genuine apprehension that I had been guilty of an unusual form of lover's extravagance—the folly of telling my secret to the winds—"I trust I was not talking out loud."

"No, no—you were behaving well enough on the moor. You were not quite so attentive to my first exclamations—not quite so desirous of rescuing ladies in distress as a true knight would have been."

"Tell me, then—how do you know my secret? how did you discover it?" I asked, my anxiety being only slightly diminished.

Olive Blake's merry laugh called me to my senses, and put me in possession of all her tricks. Blushing at its complete success, I stammered out an entreaty that she would guard it even as it was my duty to guard it.

"You're a woman of the world, Miss Blake," I concluded my exhortation by saying, "and know well how to play on the feelings of a simple young man, little used to society, and still less accustomed to converse with brilliant ladies like yourself. But I do not fear you'll make a merry story of the dextrous fashion in which you turned out the secret of my life against my will. You might show little mercy to me; but you would not disregard what is due to one of your own sex."

"Don't preach to me what I may or may not do; above all, do not threaten me with penalties if I break your code," she said, stopping short, and facing toward the moon.

"Here, Mr. Gower," she continued, playing as a high-bred girl might play with an old friend on her father's lawn, "stand in front of me, and look full into my face; the moon is shining on it. Now do you see a trace of falsehood in it?"

I answered in the negative, and I was compelled to acknowledge to myself that my genuine judgment accorded with my words.

"I beg your pardon for the impertinence I have been guilty of toward you," she went on to say. "Don't stop me, for you deserve an apology. It was easy for me to read in your features, and voice, and bearing, that you have a generous nature; and knowing your disposition, I had but small difficulty in deducing from the little you let drop the story of one side at least of your affections. With men of your nature a woman has small need of cunning to be reputed wise. The more my shame for prying into what you didn't intend me to see. I need no reproof, save that which my better taste is continually giving my high spirits. *Indeed*, I beg your pardon, Sir. Now let us continue our way, good friends."

She was so manifestly sincere in her expressions of dissatisfaction that I was anxious to lessen, if not to remove, her discomfort. I wished she had not apologized with such unaffected fervor, making a grave fault of her petty indiscretion. It would, however, never do for me to say so. I was at a loss how to proceed, when in an instant it flashed upon me how I might put her at her ease, and give myself pleasure at the same time; and the thought no sooner occurred to me than I acted upon it.

"Be good enough, Miss Blake," I said, "to give me your advice. I never expected to have a confidante on this matter before I spoke myself on the subject to the young lady who, I pray God, may one day promise to be my wife. But I should now feel truly obliged if you would, first, listen to me for a few minutes while I talk about myself, and would, secondly, advise me what course to pursue."

"Go on, I pray you. I see you know how to forgive."

I went on.

I told her (stranger though she was) the whole history of my boyish love; how I had nursed it within the recesses of my own breast for years; how I had not even yet given utterance to it to her whom it most concerned; and how I was already troubled whether it would be wiser to leave England for South America with my secret undeclared. Of course I communicated to her all the particulars requisite for the formation of a sound judgment on my case—such as the age, experience, character, and social position of the girl I hoped to bear away as my bride.

Olive Blake listened attentively. A few times she put a clear, practical question, showing that she accurately appreciated the difficulties of my position, and had mastered the facts already communicated to her. When I had completed my statement she maintained for three or four minutes a silence which she concluded by saying, in a clear and decided voice—"I do not see that the case admits of a doubt. You must go out to America unmarried. But you ought, before you leave the country, to let her know the state of your feelings."

"Thank you, Miss Blake. I am obliged to you. I will in the course of the next few weeks go down into the South and act upon your advice. I say again I am very much obliged to you. You would not think my gratitude excessive if you knew what it is to be a man, situated like myself, without mother, or sister, or even an intimate friend. And here we are at the east gate of Benton Park."

"I'll trouble you for your escort through the park. The moon gives a good light, so I could easily find my way; but I do not like passing deer and strange cattle alone when people are no longer near to protect me."

Compliance with this request lengthened our walk by another mile and a half.

"Mr. Gower," the lady said, on finally shaking hands with me at the garden gate, "I hope we shall meet again. Possibly we shall at some distant day laugh over this our first interview. In the mean time believe me to be your very good friend. I sincerely wish you happiness. I am greatly deceived if you do not deserve it more than most men."

"If we meet again, you will learn the effect your influence has had on my life. We have been thrown together by what we may as well term *accident*, and I have been led to speak to you as an old friend. I shall now act on your counsel as if you were an old friend."

"If it is my destiny," she said, lightly at first, and then seriously as she came to the close of her parting sentence, "to influence your life, I hope I may be its good fairy, bringing brightness to your days whenever they need consolation. Perhaps such a work may be appointed to me. When the stories of our lives come to be written, it may possibly be seen that the young man and the young woman, who met not two hours since for the first time on a wild moor, and who now bid each other farewell, were brought together by the Power that regulates the most trifling as well as the grandest operations of His universe. Some good work wrought out and perfected in the far-off mysterious future may be the result of to-day's adventure. But whether we meet again, or part forever, I sincerely wish you success and wise guidance at this critical period of your life. And should dark days come to you, remember what I said at the commencement of our interview, 'Duty reconciles us to any course that is not positively criminal.'"

She left me without another word, moving along the path leading to the terraces. I watched her climbing the tiers of white steps one after another. I saw her pause for a minute before the fountains, and, turning, look in my direction and over the glistening park. Her black figure was a mere speck as she ascended the entrance steps of the hall, and then that small speck also disappeared.

Long after she had entered the house I continued standing where she left me, recovering from my surprise, recalling her words, fearing she might regret having spoken to me with such familiarity, finding it hard to understand our intercourse could not be repeated.

It took me two hours to walk to the High Colliery at Shorton, where I had my lodging. The exercise of the day, the sleeplessness of the preceding night, and the mental excitement of the entire twenty-four hours, must have consumed a considerable supply of what the doctors call "nervous energy;" but ere I went to rest I took out of my desk a manuscript-book in which it was my wont to note the important events of my life. It was a rare occasion when I made an entry in my volume of *memoranda*. On that night, however, I penned in three sheets of close writing the notes from which this chapter has been composed, heading them "Interview with Miss O—B—."

This literary labor accomplished, finding myself quite ready for rest, I forthwith proceeded to my bed. Slumber soon came to me; but ere its advent I had time to review the proceedings of the day, and congratulate myself on having spoken so frankly to Miss Olive Blake, stranger though she was. Had she been an ordinary woman, I should have regretted my impetuosity and want of discretion. My reflections, however, were not disturbed by a shadow of self-condemnation; for I knew that Olive Blake was in the highest sense of the word a "lady."

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CHAPTER VIII.

FAREWELL.

My visit to "the corn country," and the revelation which Miss Blake advised me to make, resulted in my engagement to Etty Tree. There is no need to tell how I composed divers magnificent and pathetic speeches (all of them in their stilted bombast and maudlin sentimentality completely unlike myself), with the purpose of pouring them into her ear in one unbroken current of eloquent supplication; and how, when I had decoyed her from the hall of Farnham Cobb College into the little "tea-room," and, with her mother's portrait looking down upon us, had gasped out the first three words of my petition, all my beautiful phrases, and insinuating tones, and subtle considerations, and even all the commonest words of the dictionary and clumsiest sentences of ordinary life, deserted me, and I could say little more than, "Dear Etty, do tell me you will!" It is enough that dear Etty knew what I wanted, and said "Yes" a most unnecessary number of times, and allowing me to kiss her, burst into a flood of tears. It was only that old, old scene—so often acted and reacted since the foundation of human society; and yet, I do verily believe, never yet acted in the smooth, and graceful, and triumphant fashion described in novels; never yet acted without the occurrence of some absurd blunder of forgetfulness or awkwardness.

The weeks intervening between our betrothal and my departure for South America were principally occupied in preparations for my voyage. I had to take out with me a strong party of Northumbrian and Cornish miners, and London mechanics, together with a large and costly store of machinery, implements, ammunition, and provisions. Indeed the scale of my operations caused me great anxiety and some consternation; but they gratified Etty and my other Farnham Cobb friends, for their magnitude caused me to appear before them as a man of prodigious importance. While they were in progress I had to be in London with more business on my hands than I could well get through, for though I had then plenty of courage and endurance, I was young and inexperienced.

Twice, however, I traveled down on the roof of the mail-coach into "the corn country," and visited Farnham Cobb, spending nearly all of my time with Etty, and only just escaping the guilt of neglect to my dear uncle at Beechey. They were happy days. The memory of them never faded. Fresh and lovely, as in their brief period of rapid transition, they rose before me afterward, when, thousands of miles away from kindred and friends, I toiled on, endeavoring to the utmost of my insufficient power to cope with overwhelming difficulties. When I lay at death's-door, wasted by fever, surrounded by mutinous workmen, and apprehending the irruption of the robbers of the Andes—those days waited upon me, ministering to me like angels, whispering words of hope, assuring me that the Providence who had brightened my childhood with love, and guarded my youth from sin, would not surrender me in my manhood to despair.

Yes, in that dark passage of trouble those words were my comforters.

Years afterward, also—in the yet more distant

future—often and often, in the silent night and with the gloomy dawn, they reappeared in all their terrible beauty, when to think of them was to shrink from them, and to groan under one long paroxysm of anguish that, while it lasted, seemed always at its sharpest. A generation

of human life separated me from the first commencement of that old grief, and yet the pen trembles in my hand as I recall the ghastly, horrible loveliness of those days—that would persist in haunting me, when they could speak to me only of sin and shame and eternal woe.

BOOK III.

FACT:—BEING PART THE SECOND OF MISS TABITHA TREE'S NOTE-BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

MY FIRST AND ONLY LIE.

I CHRISTEN this book "Fact," because it relates to a period of my life when I passed from "Dream-land" into the domain of stern fact.

Julian Gower's pen has revealed the first and greatest secret of my existence. Let no woman blush at my hardihood in publishing that secret to the world, for, as the course of my tale will show, I am in a position to make the avowal without sacrificing my own dignity, or shocking the delicacy of others.

It was a strange, and to myself a bitterly cruel, misfortune that I did not discover my mistake in imagining that Julian Gower loved me until he had resigned his appointment at the Shorton Colliery, until he was once more in the College at Farnham Cobb, until he had made his offer to Etty and had been accepted by her. Indeed it was from Etty's lips, overflowing with triumphant happiness and sisterly love, that I received the announcement, which told at once my blindness, and folly, and egotism.

"Dearest, dearest Tibby!" my sister whispered, with an air of intense excitement, as she seated herself by my side in my favorite seat in the beech avenue.

"What is the matter, dear?" I answered. "You are pale and frightened, but you look very happy."

My lovely sister—no longer playful school-girl Etty, romping and laughing in the exuberance of childish mirth, but a woman, tall, slight, delicate, and thoughtful—put her arm round my diminutive body, and nestling close up against my small frame (as if she in all the rich bloom and perfection of beauty required my care and protection more than ever), made her confession.

"Tibby, I have seen Julian."

I started in my seat.

"Yes, he has come suddenly from the North. He found me alone in the tea-room, and I have been sitting there with him for more than an hour. He has now started off to Beechey, but he will be back here in the evening to see grandpapa on his return to Laughton."

What! Julian had entered the College, had been in it more than an hour, and left it without seeking out his old playmate Tibby? What could it mean? I did not say this, but the thoughts darted through my brain, and there was a bird fluttering in my breast, where a heart ought to have been hammering out steady and punctual strokes.

"He has walked away. He said he could not see you till I had broken the news to you, anxious as he is for your lips to assure him of your approval."

Etty still spoke in the same quick whisper in which she had begun her communication, her words leaving her white lips in one fast, unbroken current, but it seemed to me that she would be an hour in coming to the point. What was the news? Of what could Julian be anxious to obtain my approval?

"He loves me, Tibby, and has begged me to be his wife, and I've told him that I love him and will be his wife, when he returns from South America. Oh, dear Tibby! I am so happy, and you have helped to make me so. It isn't all Julian's doing. You taught me how to see and value his noble qualities, and all these long silent years since I was a little child you have been training me up to be worthy of him. Tibby, dearest Tibby, when I am *his*, every night that I kneel down by his side, and put my hands on his knees, and pray God to make and keep me a good wife, I will pray also to be enabled to be a good sister."

It was not all Julian's doing! I had taught her to see and value his noble qualities! The whole course, and all the windings through more than seven years, of my long error flashed upon me! What was I to do? What did duty—my love to Etty, my loyalty to Julian, my respect for myself—command me to do?

Mind, I do not say I was right to do as I did. I would not confound good and evil; and if these confessions lead me to the admission that for one purpose of my life I used the language of guile, I make the admission in no defiant tone, but ask my sisters and brothers to judge me generously, even as I implore my Heavenly Father to pardon me mercifully.

I told Etty a lie; the first and the last lie my life is stained by. It was but *one* falsehood, only *one*; but out of how many hundreds and thousands of lies was it built up? It took years to tell it. I began to utter it when I made answer to her in the beech-tree walk—I had not spoken the last of it when all the fair creation of hope, which in my iniquitous presumption I had striven at my soul's peril to preserve, was dashed to the ground, its ruin covering at least one noble nature in gloom and anguish for years.

I have read the writings of gentlemen learned, observant, acute, and wonderfully trained to dress up the bitterness of sarcasm and the gall of disappointment, so that they appear mere pleasantry and light-heartedness. With wit ex-

quisitely brilliant and pungent, and a Protean diversity of humorous illustrations, these gentlemen have for three hundred years been telling us that "the false" is woman's aim and habit—the air she breathes, the world she dwells in, and the world she prefers before all others. She finesses at the breakfast-table and in the ball-room; on father, brothers, husband, dependents she plays off one endless series of tricks and artifices, some of them with selfish ambition for an object, but many of them elaborated for the sake of "the pure sin of them," without any other end in view than the delight of being deceitful. This is the woman of plays, songs, novels, histories; and she is as unreal and fantastic as any thing in fairy-land. Such a woman no more rules in English homes than the foolish image of Gog or Magog sways the sceptre of the British throne. I should like to see this paltry but hurtful falsehood, this poor tradition derived centuries since from Heaven knows what impure source, this distasteful libel on human nature, driven from the domain of art. Women are not untruthful. They hate falsehood as much as men do; and if there is one thought which crosses a woman's mind oftener than another in the discharge of her daily round of duties, it is an anxious, half-instinctive reference to truth, so that her minutest actions and most trivial words may accord therewith, and that she, on laying her head on her pillow and summing up the day's proceedings, may have no recollection of any, even the minutest, defection from the narrow line of truth resting on her conscience and rendering her uneasy. Gentlemen, do not laugh at a simple woman's words. If she could make you think better of herself and sisters, she and they would doubtless be happier, and in your fuller confidence have another aid and motive to goodness; but *you* would be gainers also!

So I began to tell Etty the *one* falsehood of my life. I must call it *one* falsehood, though it led to so many.

"Etty," I said, wondering at my calmness, marveling that my voice did not betray me, and, as I spoke, covering the object of my artifice with a profusion of affectionate demonstrations, "I am very, very glad. For years I have longed for this day. When you were a child, and your beauty was still only in its rare promise, and I saw (young and inexperienced as I was) how noble a nature Julian Gower possessed, I first conceived the hope that you and Julian might live to love each other. Had I been myself less devoid of personal attractions, I might possibly have entertained other hopes with regard to one I so enthusiastically admired as I do Julian; but my little feeble frame, and pale face, and unalluring features early taught me that I was not fashioned for the love of men, and that my surest as well as most evident road to earthly happiness was to devote myself to you, and make you, and your husband, and the children that would naturally come to you, regard me with a warmth of affection that does not often gladden the life of an old maid. This lesson is a hard one to most women; but it came to me so early in life that it seemed like a part of the established order of things, and had therefore less especial bitterness for me."

"Dear, dear Tibby!" Etty broke in, with a pathetic ardor that smote my conscience, "it

was long ere I suspected your goodness; but during the last year I felt and saw what you now tell me. My love for Julian quickened my affections, making me think more for you; and last autumn, when we first began to spend our evenings here in the garden talking about Julian, and when your eyes *used to light up with a fire* as you described what a man he would be, and how proud his wife would be of him, I felt that you were anxious above all things to secure me that pride. I sometimes tried to push you on to plainer speaking; once or twice I was on the point of speaking more plainly myself. But I did not dare to do it; no, not even to my sister; for though I might hope, I did not know that Julian ever loved or could ever love me."

The "color rose to the roots of her golden hair" as she ended this sentence, and the thin curve of her short upper lip moved like ribbon in the wind, and she would have cried if she had not relieved her feelings with giving me many more kisses and caresses.

On her becoming calmer I continued the commencement of my *one* lie. I told her that when I first detected, years back, that Julian's heart was set toward her, I resolved—knowing how high, and unselfish, and noble he was—that she should not fail to esteem him through not having a judicious companion by her side, ever ready to direct her attention to his fine qualities. I told her that when I had a full and reasonable assurance that she felt for Julian as warmly as I could wish her, I was so elated with triumphant gladness that I could scarcely forbear breaking through that reserve which sisterly care and womanly delicacy enjoined me to maintain toward her. I told her that the occasions "when my eyes used to light up with a fire" were the occasions when I found it most difficult to restrain my impetuosity and curb my inclination to congratulate her on loving and having secured the love of the man whom, beyond all others, I wished to see her husband. I told her much more in the same strain.

We were together all that day till Julian's return; I would not let Etty out of my sight for a minute. I dared not be alone. There was a madness in my veins that scared me, and caused me to dread myself, and cling instinctively to society.

We remained in the beech avenue till dinner, by turns sitting on the bench and walking up and down. We talked very fast and confusedly of the past, present, and future—each thinking the other very happy, each herself too excited for real enjoyment. At two o'clock we went into the hall and dined with Mrs. Skettle, my grandfather having gone over for the day to Laughton. My high spirits and Etty's face, by turns pale and flushed, were facts that ruffled even Mrs. Skettle's tranquillity, and she looked at us several times inquisitively over her knife and fork.

"Mr. Julian Gower has been here, my dears?" observed the old lady, in an interrogative tone, at the close of the repast.

"Yes, Mrs. Skettle," I answered, seeing an expression of nervousness come over Etty's face.

"He didn't stop long?" continued the old lady, whose curiosity had been roused by Julian's unexpected visit and sudden departure.

"Not long; but he'll be here again this even-

ing to drink tea with grandpapa. He's looking very well."

"Coming again this evening! Umph! Then he'll be wanting Mr. Easy to do him some favor."

"Not a doubt about that," I answered, with a laugh, as Etty flushed scarlet in an instant.

"And yet he isn't in the ordinary way after wanting favors," added Mrs. Skettle, very perplexed, and unusually fidgety.

"Do you think, Mrs. Skettle, he can want me for his wife, and is bent on asking grandpapa to let him take me away with him in that capacity?"

"Miss Tree, I am ashamed of you!" exclaimed Mrs. Skettle, tartly, and genuinely offended. "I am ashamed of you, talking in such a way before a child like Etty!"

This was too much for Etty, who rose quickly, and, giving Mrs. Skettle a hurried kiss on her way to the door, made her exit from the hall before grace had been said.

"Lor, Miss Tree, I hope I have not offended Etty by calling her a child!" observed Mrs. Skettle, in consternation.

"What a ridiculous notion! didn't she kiss you?" I said, also rising, and hastening after Etty, by whose side I again was ere she had been a minute out of my sight.

My grandfather returned to tea, and had a long interview with Julian before that entertainment. When he entered the room with my dear old school-fellow—or, as he most frequently called him, "that promising young man"—by his side, he seemed cheerful and glad, but when I had sprung forward to Julian, and after greeting him with a torrent of congratulations and sisterly good wishes, had given him a cup of tea to present to Etty, I looked again at my grandfather, and discerned that same expression of silent, long-enduring sadness which I had witnessed for the first time more than two years before (when I asked him to send Etty to school), and had since observed more than once. As I regarded him, he raised his eyes and saw that I was watching him. The good old man did not drop his eyes, but looked me full in the face; and I in return met his gaze, and we looked right into each other's hearts. *I would not be looked down.* Just as I was on the point of being overcome by my feelings, and laughing hysterically, my grandfather dropped his gaze, and I gained the victory. After that I could not throughout the evening catch my grandfather's eye, though I repeatedly watched him, and though I felt, whenever I was not watching him, that his observation was upon me.

After tea Julian and Etty walked about the garden together, as lovers should; and I in the sombre silence of the beech avenue mused by myself on the days when Julian and I were inseparable companions, and we occasionally gave Etty a little condescending attention.

It was the period of the year when the evenings close in rapidly; so, notwithstanding the early hour at which we had tea, I had but little time for my solitary meditations ere the darkness and cold of an autumnal night were around me. Indoors all was warm and bright, the talk being all the livelier for Julian's high spirits.

"How many years is it since you knew 'my secret'?" inquired he of me, as the party was

breaking up at a later hour than our usual time for retiring to rest.

"You remember our talk at Lymm Hall?" I answered, parrying question with question.

"Surely," was his answer.

"Do you think I knew any thing of your secret before then?" I asked.

"That's what I wish to know."

"Julian Gower," I replied, "I'll answer your question when you have been married ten years, if after those ten years of married life can you say, 'Little Tibby Tree, who helped me to make love to her beautiful sister Etty, and never asked for more confidence than it was my humor to place in her, was a true friend to me when I was a boy, and now that I have been married ten years, I don't know where to look (my wife excepted) for a more trust-worthy and sympathizing companion!'"

Then little Tibby Tree lighted her candle, and climbed the black oak staircase, having first given her grandfather a kiss without looking at him.

As Etty went into her room little Tibby Tree joined the happy girl, and did not leave her till she was in bed; and Etty was not packed in bed that night until she had had much more talk and cosseting than she ordinarily received from her sister during the course of her nightly toilet.

Then little Tibby Tree went to her own room; and hours after every one else, including even Etty, was sound asleep, she sat before her looking-glass, wondering whether she would have courage, and resolution, and constancy enough to act her "first lie" out to the last. Slowly her candle burned down to its last two inches, when it spluttered and guttered into such a winding-sheet as surely was never before witnessed in the superstitious corn country of the old time. The flame went down, diminishing till it was nothing more to the sight than a minute phosphorescent speck on a piece of charred wick. Then all of a sudden it flared up into a dazzling blaze, speedily collapsing, however, into a long fit of throbbings and flutterings, which terminated in its perishing utterly, and leaving the victory to the darkness. But still little Tibby Tree retained her seat, thinking how ghastly and revolting the semblance of her pallid ugliness had been in the mirror the while the candle-light had died in convulsive flickerings—recalling too, strangely enough, a childish pet of Etty's, rather more than two years before, when the beautiful spoiled girl had said, "How strange it is, Tibby, that I should have to obey a little snub-nosed, wall-eyed chit like you!"

CHAPTER II.

THE LESSON OF THE ROSE.

TILL Julian's vessel sailed from Liverpool, my life was so full of excitement, consequent on a continued variety of incidents requiring a corresponding variety of effort at self-control, that I was spared the pain of looking out years before me, as I did after his departure.

But when he had looked his last farewell upon us, and I, and Etty, and my dear grandfather knew that we should not be warmed by his smile for five long years, and we had turned away from the garden (in which we had said adieu to Ju-

lian), and by different paths sought out the solitude in which we did not despair of finding comfort, another current of experiences began to set in.

For many days Etty was very subdued and pensive. A silence, that contrasted strongly with her ordinary mood, came upon her; and the gentleness of her sweet disposition was intensified. All my days it had been my use to tend on her, but now she insisted on playing the servant to me—waiting upon me, fetching and carrying for me, and continually coming up to my side and stroking my scanty tresses. "Dear Tibby," she once said, "you must teach me to be like you; forgetful of myself, thoughtful of others, and cheerful under trial. I must learn to be worthy of Julian. It is the only occupation that will make me endure life and enjoy the blessings round me, now he is away."

I knew I did not merit such commendation, but it pleased me, as praise always does, and the more as it was evidence she had not detected the sorrow which I had wrapped up in my lie.

My dear grandfather and I also came closer together. Ever since Julian's acceptance by Etty there had been an embarrassment between my grandfather and me. He knew my secret; I was well aware he knew it; and he knew that I had that knowledge of his knowledge. And yet we had never given, the either to the other, a single hint of what was always in the thoughts of each. We felt it right to look away from the secret, and so with an awkward consciousness of mutual constraint we used to look away from each other. This new and unnamed burden on our intercourse was very grievous to me. But soon my dear grandfather removed it with one of those simple and eloquent courtesies, of which gentlemen of "the old school" were consummate masters.

It was late in the autumn. We had said good-by to roses, Etty and I having weeks before plucked the last of the scented leaves for our annual stock of "*pot pourri*," when, as I descended the College steps after breakfast for an hour's exercise in the dry wind and leaves that swept over the garden paths, my grandfather approached me with a rose in his hand and a rosy light in his countenance.

"I bring you an offering, lady, a rare treasure at this time of the year. I found it in a warm corner, all by itself, and crowning the top of a blighted bush that seemed not to have sap enough to feed its own dry sticks. And when I plucked it, I said, 'I'll bear it to a lady who is wise enough to find a lesson in it—that—'"

He paused, for he knew his words were not needed to point the moral of the rose.

"I will keep it, dear," I said, slowly, looking at him so that he might see I wished my words to convey their full meaning, "and even when it is dead I'll read its lesson—that there is no lot in life so stern, and cold, and hard, but that it has somewhere a warm and secret corner in which human affection can blossom. Be sure of that, dear. I am glad you see so well that I stand in need of such a lesson. It comforts, and will comfort me to know that the sympathy of your fine nature surrounds my sorrow and weakness, though we shall never talk about them."

The dear old man only said, "God bless thee, child!"

"And, dear," I added, more in my customary tone of matter-of-fact cheerfulness, "I am going to change my bedroom for one distant from Etty's. You see, sometimes I shall sit up, and be wakeful during the night, and might disturb Etty in my present quarters. So I mean to seek out my own 'warm, secret corner,' like the rose. Perhaps when I come down to breakfast in the morning you'll have sometimes to kiss a pale, white face, and look at two leaden eyes that have slept but ill; but you won't mind that, for you'll know I have only been trying to carry out the teaching of the rose."

My grandfather made no answer; but as I moved away to the beech avenue he raised his old three-cornered hat from his gray locks, and remained uncovered as long as I was in sight. Had I been a queen he could not have done more. His homage was so simple and full of dignity, and so eloquent of his loyal nature. I was his little grand-daughter, whom he had nursed on his knee and reared with parental solicitude; but not to her was his reverence offered. I was tried to the full endurance of which a woman's heart is capable, and I was endeavoring to bear my lot with becoming fortitude. For the moment, my suffering and appropriate resolution were to him types of certain qualities which in all ages have drawn to women the love and fealty of generous men. To them—and not to me—he stood uncovered with the autumn wind buffeting his white hair.

CHAPTER III.

A DRIVE OVER THE RED LEAVES.

A FEW days after my grandfather had pointed out to me the lesson of the rose, he surprised me by announcing in a cheery voice that he was bent on driving his little horse over to Laughton, and should be well pleased with my company on the excursion.

A journey to Laughton was a rare event with my grandfather, although it was one of the principal towns of our division of the corn country, was only twelve miles distant from Farnham Cobb, and was, moreover, the place in which resided Mr. Gurley, the solicitor of the Reverend Solomon Easy, of Farnham Cobb College. Certainly my grandfather did not on the average pay more than two visits a year to the market-town, and those two visits he was in the habit of making without a companion, and since his last expedition to Laughton only a few weeks had elapsed. I had therefore reason to feel surprised at his proposal.

Of course I did not decline the invitation. Laughton was still to me a grand centre of intelligence. Its population of three thousand inhabitants, its member of Parliament, its market, the legal proceedings at its magistrates' sittings, its book-club, its supply of "Paris fashions," its turnpike-road, with four "up" and four "down" coaches a day, made it a great object of interest to me. The fact that Julian had been educated in its grammar school did not make me less curious about it, and yet in the whole course of my life I had not been a dozen times in the streets of Laughton; my last visit to it being on the occasion of my last return from school, when I

was deposited by the guard of "The Telegraph" at the "Blue Boar," and was received by my grandfather, who, without an interval of three minutes, put me and my boxes in a hired chaise and drove me off to Farnham Cobb.

My grandfather had some reason for disliking Laughton, and never entered it save when business compelled him. The same dislike made him uneasy when any member of his family went there. The consequence was that I and Etty were cut off from one communication with the outer world, which girls living in a secluded country district usually enjoy. Our shopping was all done at the petty shops of our own and two neighboring villages, and when those establishments could not supply our wants they went unsupplied, unless one of the village dealers obligingly went over to Laughton for the required article. It is needless to say that this tended to raise Laughton in our estimation. It was an emporium for articles of taste and luxury, which we could not arrive at save through the agency of our neighbors.

A drive to Laughton was therefore pleasant as a proposal, and was not less agreeable as an actual experience.

My grandfather was in the best of spirits as we drove through the lanes, smooth and dry for the time of year, but still quite free from dust. On either side of the ways the red leaves lay in heaps, at places effectually muffling our wheels, that were only too much given to rattling. The bare branches of the stripped timber ran up to a lefty angle over our heads, and through their stark cordage were visible the gray clouds which, though they altogether fenced out the dazzle of the sun, were far from gloomy. Fashionable ladies often tell me nowadays that "the fall of the leaf" is an unhealthy season, which can only be passed with security by the sea-side, or in a few high, dry, and singularly favored localities. It may be so, but I never found it out when I lived in the "corn country" in the good old time.

Occasionally our course was enlivened by the reports of guns fired in the covers flanking the lanes, or on distant ridges—clear, clean, mellow percussions, that pleasantly broke the monotony of the low humming wind. My grandfather had not "shot" for several years, but he diverted me with a series of sporting anecdotes, from which it appeared that he was in his day one of the quickest and surest "guns" in the corn country. These stories led him to "the game" which the peasants with zealous and unbought service used to preserve for him at Sandhill, the mention of which locality induced him next to speak of Mr. Michael Clawline in the old terms of hearty eulogy. "He is an excellent and most honest fellow, the best bailiff in the whole country, and sincerely attached to me. Like all old servants he is sometimes a little jealous about his dignity, and so on; and then I have to come down sharp upon him, and ask him if he knows what his master's name is, and that's a little disagreeable. But then I know him so thoroughly that I can manage him with very little difficulty." As my grandfather uttered these words he looked round at me, and twirled his whip emphatically, as though he would have relished an expression of assent on my part. But I could not find heart to encourage him in that way:

for somehow, in spite of my sincere wish to live in charity with all my fellow-creatures, there had grown up within me a distrust of Mr. Clawline. Ever since Julian had in the harvest field indulged in a fit of indignation against Michael Clawline for disdaining to "strip tew his work," I had watched that bailiff more closely, and criticised him more shrewdly, and the result was I did not like him. Of course I did not tell my grandfather so.

More than two or three times as we drew nearer to Laughton we encountered a ponderous family coach, belonging to one of the surrounding gentry. In those days wealthy yeomen gentry, living ordinarily in the same kitchens with their servants, and enjoying the society of the village ale-houses, felt their dignity concerned in keeping up their old family coaches. Wonderful structures they were! Built some hundred years before, big enough to hold a dozen persons, clamped at every corner with heavy iron bands, possessing windows so small that an inside passenger could only look through them, one eye at a time, and made with a box elevated ten or twelve feet above the ground, they had been handed down from generation to generation, been bequeathed as valuable legacies, been treated as heir-looms. They were drawn by two, four, or six hairy-legged cart-horses taken from the plow, and were driven now by one farm servant, now by another—the same ponderous cover, covered with tarnished lace, being, however, used by the Jehu, whoever he might be. The yeoman proprietor, of course, never climbed into one of these locomotive strong-holds. He rode on horseback. For unmixed enjoyment or ordinary farm-house intercourse his lady also rode her stout nag (on a pillion); but she "had out the family coach" every Sunday to go to church, because it was both dignified and *pious*, its use (like the employment of Sunday clothes) enhancing the respectability of the family, and showing respect to the Lord of the Day. She "had it out" also whenever she drove into the nearest county town, because it was dignified and *useful*; its panels displaying the family quarterings, and its capacious interior affording ample room for the heavy wares of grocery, drapery, and vintner's stuff, which had to be periodically conveyed from "town" to the "manor-house." In my childhood I have seen in "the corn country" as many as six of these lumbering vehicles round a village church during an ordinary Sunday service, their owners (yeomen farmers as they *called* themselves, *gentry* as they deemed themselves) being inhabitants of the parish whose church they thus honored. In less conservative districts smart bounding gigs expelled these lumbering equipages at the opening of the present century; but in the corn country they lingered on for another generation.

Such were the carriages my grandfather and I encountered as we trundled over the red leaves toward Laughton.

"Why, grandpapa," I exclaimed, "we never went this way before!"

"No, my dear," he answered, filipping up the little horse, "I have always driven into Laughton by another road—for a purpose."

The last words were uttered with marked significance; but instead of asking what the "purpose" might be, I quietly held my peace, and

waited till further explanation should come spontaneously.

Emerging from a tunnel of dove-tailing branches, we passed from the soft bed of leaves beneath them to the hard white turnpike-road. Startled by the change of sound consequent upon the wheels and his hoofs acting on a firmer surface, the little horse broke into a canter, and we rattled merrily down the turnpike-road, between the palings and skirting wood of a gentleman's park, and with the town of Laughton lying in a valley, about a mile before us.

"What is that house, grandpapa? what a beautiful place it is!" I exclaimed, as a mansion of Italian architecture, seated on the boldest swell of a fine hill ridge, and surrounded by the magnificent trees of the finest wooded park I have ever seen in my life, burst upon my sight.

The hill ridge declined toward us, down to the marge of a piece of artificial water, almost large enough to deserve the title of a "lake," and ornamented with little islands, beautifully planted for the accommodation of the aquatic birds that were playing in separate companies at different points of the water. The bank on our side rose with a gentle acclivity, which was uniformly maintained by the park, until it reached the level of the high-road, from which it was only separated by one of Kent's ha-ha's. A similar sunk fence ran on the other side of the road, beyond which the park extended, as far as the eye could reach, through avenues, vistas, clumps, and belts; the large park, even in its most remote parts, having been laid out by a designer anxious to illustrate on a magnificent scale the rules of that art from which Humphrey Repton (the "Suffolk" Gardener) subsequently derived his title of Landscape Gardener.

I was so lost in the beauties of the park, through which we were literally driving, and the attractions of which we could (thanks to the liberality of the sunk fences!) see at our ease, that I forgot to repeat my question, but left my grandfather at his leisure to answer it about a minute after it was asked.

"The place is called 'Laughton Abbey,'" said my grandfather; "there, behind yon trees, down at the turn of the water, you may see the ruins of the old abbey from which that fine gewgaw place takes its name."

He checked the little horse to a slow walk, in order that I might have time to survey the scene, and as he spoke pointed with his whip in the direction of the ruins, far lovelier to look upon in their gray age than the palace crowning the hill above them.

"I spent much of my time in that house when I was a young man," my grandfather said, slowly: "it was for a few weeks the home to me of a brief happiness; it has been for threescore years the source of a long-enduring pain. That house knows the reason why I never come into this town without the renewal of an old grief, and yet can not altogether keep myself from it. Till the other day I didn't wish you ever to see it; but you have more claim on my confidence than ever. You can name now a part of my motives for never before showing you the place."

While he spoke we were progressing slowly, and as he finished we had reached a new point of interest. On our right hand, standing in the middle of a circle of lofty elms, appeared Laugh-

ton church, its high flint tower facing the road, and looking at a picturesque cottage ornée, situated on the opposite side of the road, in a corner of the park. The church was a beautiful edifice, and the cottage was the prettiest structure of the kind imaginable. A garden surrounded the picturesque little dwelling, which was then undergoing repair at the hands of a strong band of carpenters, whose exertions were at that very moment being superintended by Mr. Gurley.

"Ah! ha!" exclaimed Mr. Gurley, looking squarer than ever, and running out of the garden to greet us in some such fashion as a very stout old oak box might be supposed to run, "my dear old friend, Mr. Solomon Easy, and Miss Tree. My dear Miss Tree, allow me to welcome you to Laughton. You so rarely visit us it is really quite an event to see you here. You should have come before the leaves were off the trees. But now you are here, Miss Tree, tell us how you like the look of us?"

Mr. Gurley's question had no immediate relation to himself, but to the property of which he was (as I soon found out) steward, and was (as I also soon found out) as proud of as if it belonged to himself.

"It is a beautiful place; but really, Mr. Gurley," I answered, "I admire the cottage you are now putting in repair as much as any thing I have at present seen."

"A pretty thing, certainly, a very pretty thing," answered Mr. Gurley, putting out his square lump of a hand patronizingly, as if he wished to pat the cottage on the back, "but a mere toy. A part of the property you see. And as long as I am the steward of this property, and am responsible for the preservation of this property, I'll have every thing in repair. That's my rule. The carpenters and bricklayers don't object to it, I can tell you. Still, it is a pretty thing. Miss Tree, I'll remember you call it, and think it, a pretty thing. Perhaps one of these days you may want a pretty little toy of a cottage, and then I shall know where to find a good tenant for the Laughton Abbey property. Now, Mr. Easy, what are you going to do to-day?"

My grandfather blushed a little as he answered, "Well, Mr. Gurley, to tell you all my plans, Tibby and I are going to look over the Abbey to-day—the house I mean, the inside of it."

"Exactly," said Mr. Gurley, raising the square lids of his eyes, and taking a pinch of snuff.

"You see," added my grandfather, in an explanatory manner, and with more of an apologetic tone than was altogether consistent with his usual dignity of bearing, "it's only to gratify me with a review of old associations. There can be no harm in gratifying a taste for old associations."

"Unless they lead to expense," put in Mr. Gurley, sententiously. "I remember that consideration always, whenever I am asked my opinion about an indulgence of any kind. Bless you, I can point to scores of noble and opulent families irrecoverably impoverished by simply indulging in old associations. Old associations, Mr. Easy, are sometimes very dangerous associates. A passion for the turf is sometimes less mischievous than a taste for old associations."

"Well," returned my grandfather, laughing with genuine pleasure at his lawyer's worldly shrewdness and energetic manner, "old asso-

ciations won't ruin me to-day. Five shillings to the housekeeper will just about cover the expense."

"Come and tell me so this evening over a mutton cutlet and a glass of my old Madeira."

"Will you be alone?" inquired my grandfather.

Mr. Gurley's countenance fell, for he knew what would be the result of his reply. "Almost alone. Nobody but Choate and his daughters."

"Pah!" exclaimed my grandfather, with a look of lively disgust in his countenance: "what, the young man who plays such an insufferable game of whist! No, no, Gurley; I couldn't sit in the same room for half an hour with that young man without (old as I am) trying to thrash him."

"He's wonderfully improved," said Mr. Gurley, laughing. "Come and judge for yourself."

"No, no! I'll come some other day when you haven't the young man with you," said my grandfather, whisking his whip, and driving on to the Blue Boar, High Street, Laughton.

CHAPTER IV.

LAUGHTON ABBEY.

THE little horse having been consigned to the hostler of the Blue Boar, we walked back up the High Street, and turning to our left through the church-yard, crossed the bridge which spanned "the fall" of the park-water, and in half an hour were standing at the chief entrance of the mansion.

The door was answered by a maid-servant, who, on seeing my grandfather, immediately ran for Mrs. Tate, the housekeeper.

"Lor, your reverence, who'd have thought of seeing you again so soon?" exclaimed that lady, with loquacious good-humor. "Why it were but the other day that your reverence did us the honor of a visit. And your reverence's visits *are* visits! My best respects to you, ma'am."

"My grand-daughter, Mrs. Tate," said my grandfather, briefly introducing me to the respectable and elderly dame; and adding, as an explanation for my benefit—"I am in the habit of coming here once a year or so, Tibby. My last call was made a few weeks since, on the very same day on which our dear boy Julian paid us his unexpected visit. Mrs. Tate is so good as to gratify an old man's whim, and let him wander at his leisure through the rooms in which, as a boy, he spent many happy hours. It's very good of her."

Mrs. Tate's face beamed with satisfaction at this respectful style of language, and she broke in with—"And I should like to know, your reverence, who has a better right to walk through the rooms than you, unless it be—"

"Hish! hish!" put in my grandfather, raising his hand deprecatingly. "Never mind that now. Let by-gones be by-gones."

"As your reverence pleases," responded the good woman. "Of course on such matters my tongue is your reverence's. And here, Sir, are the keys."

Taking the keys, my grandfather crossed the hall, and opening a door with one of them, led me into a long picture-gallery, closing the lock

carefully behind us. Every turn in the mansion was known to him. Through a series of apartments, all of them appearing to my unsophisticated eyes as of unapproachable magnificence, although the furniture was covered with clintz wrappers, we passed. On the ground-floor a succession of lofty drawing-rooms, a banquetting-room, a billiard-room, a concert-room, a superbly-fitted library, divers cozy little parlors; up stairs a still greater number of bedrooms, dressing-rooms, morning-rooms, boudoirs, snuggeries, with a perplexing intricacy of passages, corridors, and staircases! Every spot and article had a freshness and brightness that testified the house was not deserted by the wealthy. Whatever its history might be, it was clear that its ordinary occupants were by no means confined to Mrs. Tate and her maid.

"Who is the owner of this splendid place, grandfather?" I inquired, when we had continued our inspection in unbroken silence for at least half an hour.

"Hush! don't ask questions yet. I'll tell you all by-and-by," he answered, somewhat gruffly. "Be silent now, and look at a portrait I will show you."

These words were exchanged in a room fitted up as a music-room, with a piano-forte, harp, and other instruments—a room that would have been a feature of an ordinary country-house, but was lost in that superb palace. The last of them was scarcely uttered when my grandfather pressed with his hand against a concealed spring, and a secret door flew open, revealing the daintiest, most costly, and exquisite boudoir that surely ever a daughter of wealth possessed for purposes of luxurious retirement. The walls were covered with rose-colored satin, a velvet carpet of the same tint made the feet fall silent on the floor; through glass of the same delicate color the light came in from the park; the door, window-frames, and all the wood-work necessary in such a closet were of polished rose-wood; the cornices, door-handles, and mantle-piece were of ivory inlaid with gold and valuable stones; and a corresponding lavish expenditure of wealth was manifest in every article of furniture.

And the picture? There it was; the one sole object of which my grandfather's eyes took notice! A portrait of a young and lovely woman; a woman not less beautiful than Etty, and in some respects—such as the long neck, delicate outline of features, golden hair, and blue eyes—bearing a considerable resemblance to her. In an evening dress, her snowy arms and shoulders bare in their dazzling whiteness, her rich tresses looped with strings of softly effulgent pearls, and the stoma-cher of her ball-dress flashing with diamonds! Dignified, but without a touch of arrogance or pride. Gentle, delicate, coy!

"Grandfather, come away," I said. "Come away. I've seen her."

I spoke these words, for there was that in my dear grandfather's face which positively frightened me. He was so entranced by that lovely portrait, a nervous dread ran through me that the deep emotion it roused might have even a more painful result than a temporary overthrow of self-control.

"That was Gertrude Clare," he said, hoarsely, turning away, and hastening back to the music-room without another word.

He sat on a sofa in that room for several minutes, till the blood had returned to his whitened cheek and he had recovered his composure. Then he rose, and leading me back to the large picture-gallery on the ground-floor—past the portraits of armed knights, and ruffled sages, and plumed warriors, and ringlet-wearing gallants—directed my attention to a full-length portrait of a handsome soldier, who wore a scarlet uniform of a comparatively modern fashion. My grandfather had no need to tell me the officer's name, for on the frame, beneath the spurred feet, was painted, "Sir Marmaduke Clare, K.C.B."

"He was Gertrude's husband," said my grandfather, curtly.

In less than five minutes we had, with an appropriate acknowledgment, returned the borrowed keys to Mrs. Tate, and were again walking in the park.

"And now, Tibby," said my grandfather, sitting down on a clump of fallen stone amidst the abbey ruins, to which our steps had taken us, "I'll tell you a story—ay, *the* story of my life."

He waited till I had nestled down at his feet, on the ground, careless of autumn damp and wind, as a country girl ought to be; and then he proceeded:

"When I was a lad, fresh from college, I was tutor to the heir of this noble estate, Arthur Clare by name. He was a noble boy, but he died early, when he had been my pupil scarcely two years; and his great wealth devolved on his only sister, Gertrude, the lovely girl whose portrait you saw just now. Young as he was, and short as was my connection with him, Arthur had formed a warm attachment to me, and I was treated by him and all the members of his family with a familiarity and respect not usually exhibited to the tutors of the wealthy by their employers. Well, I was mad enough—fool enough—to fall in love with Gertrude Clare, who was her brother's senior by two years. She had then no great possessions or expectations, and I was of a gentle yeoman family, with an affluent father, and the culture of a gentleman; so my presumption was not at first so enormous as it afterward appeared—as it still appears. Any how, I vowed that Gertrude Clare should be my wife. I had a brother in those days, and I made him the sole confidant of my hopes; explaining to him my resolve, and at the same time describing all the difficulties in my way—above all, the difficulty of hinting my passion to a lady so much my social superior. Having gone thus far, I contrived to introduce my brother to Arthur Clare, and so obtained for him an invitation to Laughton, where he soon became a frequent visitor, and even a greater favorite than myself."

He paused for a minute, leaving me to imagine a cruel drama. I had never before heard my grandfather speak of his brother, never even knew that he had had one.

"Well, Tibby, like many other young men, I wooed in vain. Gertrude Clare made another choice—a choice disapproved by her guardians—and eloped with a man not better born than myself, and not very much richer. And I, out of no higher motive than spite, led to church an honest farmer's daughter—a pure, simple girl, but in every respect much beneath my condi-

tion. I never wronged her; and she did much better by me than I deserved in presenting me with a charming daughter—in due course, my dear, to become your mother."

"Dear grandfather," said I, foolishly thinking that such silly words could comfort him, "Gertrude Clare was not worthy of you."

"Lord, Tibby darling," he said, with something like a laugh softening his bitterness, raising as he spoke his right arm to his eyes, "what does that matter to a man who's in love? I knew that as well then as you do now, but the knowledge no more comforts me now than it did then. I tell thee, if in my bitterest grief I could but have said, 'She's far too good for me, and 'tis better for her as it is,' my trouble would have been lightened by one-half. I would cut off my right hand to be able even now to say it honestly."

"And who was Gertrude's husband?—a blood relation?" I inquired, the name of Marmaduke Clare misleading me.

"What! haven't I been plain enough?" exclaimed my grandfather, with excitement—indeed, almost fiercely.

"Yes, yes, quite enough!" I answered, rising quickly from the ground. "Say nothing more. I see it all. Oh, dear grandfather, how very horrible!"

"Ay, girl," the old man continued, in spite of my entreaty, "my brother Marmaduke—my own brother, of the same father and mother as myself, *stole her from me*. The brother to whom I had trusted every thing, the brother who never beheld her till he had learned how I loved her, the brother who if I had not so confided in him could never have even approached her presence—*stole her from me, and then laughed at me*. He took her name, just as he took every thing I ever valued in life. He joined Lymm Hall to her fine estate, and made it a farm. Forty years ago his name was on every body's lips. Brave as a lion on the field of battle, he won honors in the time of war only to disgrace them in time of peace. The gambling-table and every conceivable extravagance brought Lymm Hall and all his wife's possessions into the hands of money-lenders. He broke Gertrude's heart. His sons and daughters are outcasts. He died himself twenty years since, in senile decay, though he was scarce past the middle time of life. And as soon as his wretched, beggared grandchildren come of age, that fine house up there and all in it, Lymm Hall and every inch of land he ever called his own, will, by a decree of the Court of Chancery, come to the auctioneer's hammer, and be knocked down to the highest bidder. Such was my only brother."

"Grandfather," I said, "twenty years is a long time, and it is all that long time since he went to his account. Surely you have forgiven him."

In a minute he was calm and quiet as a placid child, and with pathetic solemnity asked, "Tibby, have you ever known me tell an untruth?"

"Never, grandfather," I answered, indignant-ly.

"Do you think I could be guilty of falsehood?"

"No."

"Then hear me, Tibby. Long ere my brother died I forgave him as completely as I hope to be

forgiven. For years I cherished a resolve never to mention these things to you, or any other living person, but you see I have changed my mind, not, however, out of resentment to him, or out of any disrespect to his memory."

As we walked over the park once more on our way back to the Blue Boar I was well pleased that my grandfather had declined Mr. Gurley's invitation. I had so much to think about, that the society of even more agreeable persons than the young man "who played such an insufferable game of whist" would have been irksome to me.

Important as the disclosures, and exciting as the occupation of the day had been, they had consumed comparatively little time. It was not three o'clock in the afternoon, when my grandfather and I, having partaken of refreshment at the Blue Boar, started on our homeward journey over the red leaves, and through the dusky lanes. He had altogether mastered his agitation; and as he drove the little horse, he told me in his customary placid manner some more particulars relating to Laughton Abbey, and my relations whom I had never seen—never before even heard of. Sir Marmaduke Clare, he informed me, had left three children—all living abroad in that poverty which not seldom covers the fallen members of our proud aristocracy. Of these three children, two—a son and a daughter—had numerous children, the youngest of whom would come of age in two or three years, when the Laughton property would be sold. No member of the Clare family would ever return to the county. To my question whether he ever had any intercourse with any of the younger generation, he said he never saw his brother or Gertrude after their marriage, and had never held communication of any kind with any of their descendants. Possibly, he suggested, they had never heard of me, any more than till that day I had heard of them. He added also, that ever since Sir Marmaduke Clare's death, Mr. Gurley had acted as steward to the Laughton estates, having manifested in that capacity the same intelligence that he displayed in every thing he took in hand, and having saved and collected much money for the creditors of the estate which would otherwise have been lost.

Among other plans adopted by Mr. Gurley to increase the income of the estate, was that of keeping the "house" in the same state of perfect repair and elaborate adornment as it was characterized by when the Clares were in the zenith of their prosperity, and letting it to tenants of the highest condition. The attractions of the place, its vicinity to the town of Laughton, whose member of Parliament was in most cases little else than the nominee of the Abbey estate, and the abundant materials offered by the estate for shooting and other sport, made the wealthiest and most distinguished personages of the land, from time to time, occupants of the Abbey. Just then the house was without a tenant—but Mr. Gurley was already in communication with Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham, of the famous banking-house known as "Petersham and Blake, of Lombard Street," which gentleman thought of hiring the Abbey for a shooting-box during the autumn and winter months.

"Let us have tea, Tibby," said my grandfather, as the little horse lugged us slowly up the

Farnham Cobb hill; and lowering his voice, he added impressively, "and mind, my dear, tell no one any thing of to-day's adventures and revelations until I am in my grave. Beyond that I don't wish to bind you."

That evening I felt myself drawn to Etty with an unusual tenderness. As it was chill, we sat in the tea-room, with a bright brisk fire crackling and bubbling up the chimney; while Etty, occupying a seat before her writing-desk, was busy for more than an hour with her pen. I watched her, and as I saw her cheek by turns glow with her thoughts, and become tranquil as she deliberately set them out on her paper, I knew that she was preparing her second monthly dispatch for Julian Gower; and looking on her serene face, I was from the very bottom of my heart glad that she had deprived me of my correspondent.

I was her lady's-maid that night, dressing her sunny hair for the pillow, and tucking her in as I had done years before when she was only a little child. And as she slowly dozed off to a calm slumber, I remained by her bedside and pretended to be reading one of Miss Edgeworth's novels, but was all the time stealing glances at her from over the pages of the book.

How light a trial was mine compared with that which had embittered my dear grandfather's days! My sister had won my hero's love, *but she had not stolen it!* I had confided in her, *but she had not betrayed me!* "Dearest, dearest Etty!" I repeated to myself many times, "how I love you! how I love you!"

How merciful it is that God does not permit his feeble creatures to foresee all the sorrow the future is to bring them!

CHAPTER V.

A SEPARATION.

I WAS never again to drive over the red leaves to Laughton with my grandfather. The autumn was followed by a long, cold winter—of snow deeper than the memory of man could recall as having ever before covered the "corn country"—and of sharp frost that nipped the young, and bit the aged to the very marrow of the bones. And when the snows had slowly dissolved, a cheerless spring sent a raw east-wind moaning over the wet country. To me and Etty it was a spring of disaster, a spring that gave a gloom to all the bright suns of future Aprils.

My dear grandfather bore up bravely through the sharp cold of January and February; but with the setting in of the March thaw his endurance failed, and he was attacked with that slow, depressing malady, which in the old time was called throughout the corn country "a bad cold," but is nowadays termed influenza, and bronchitis, and half a dozen other inexpressive names. I had never known him ill before. The medical practitioner who doctored the poor of the parish hardly ever had occasion to enter our doors, from which mental quiet, due exercise, and healthy ways of life, united to the powers of sound constitutions, warded off disease. Now and then one of our servants ailed a little, and then the doctor's art was had recourse to sparingly; but since Etty recovered from scarlatina in

her eighth year, neither she, nor I, nor Mrs. Skettle, nor my grandfather, had ever taken a dose of medicine beyond the compounds of that traditional pharmacy, which, under the head of house-physics, maintained its ground in the store-rooms of the corn country even down to the present generation.

"A cold" was to us then "only a cold;" and it was not till I found my dear grandfather suffering acutely under the rapid progress of internal inflammation that I became alarmed, or thought of urging him to take medical advice. And when I timidly proffered this prudent counsel, he rejected it with the irritation of a sick man. No, he would have nothing to do with physics. He would soon throw off the cold; but, alas! it was he who was thrown off, and not the cold.

He went out for a walk in the chill, raw air, bent on "walking off his malady," and when he returned in half an hour his prostration was so cruel to witness, that I, on my own responsibility, dispatched Isaac Stoddart over to Laughton with a note to Mr. Gurley, asking him what was to be done. I knew very little of Mr. Gurley, save that he was a gentleman much respected by my grandfather for his kindness of heart and sound common sense. But I literally had no other friend to apply to in my difficulty.

I acted as I thought best, and fortunately I did no harm.

The rain was descending in torrents, and the wind was howling round the College gables with such fury, that sitting by my grandfather's bedside I could not hear the clock in the hall strike *eight* when Mr. Gurley drove up to the gate. He had come promptly through the storm and darkness, bringing with him in his gig the first medical practitioner of Laughton.

But ere this arrival I had led my dear grandfather to bed, and given him a cup of warm drink which seemed to revive him. For half an hour he lay in a state of composure, and then he spoke to me, saying distinctly, and without effort, all the words that passed his lips.

"Tibby, we are alone?"

"Yes, dear grandfather, quite alone."

"Whatever happens to you in life—whatever clouds may rise over you, whatever temptations you may have to resist—let nothing separate you from Etty. Cling to her; make her cling to you."

"Surely I will, dear grandfather. You can not fear I shall fail to do so?"

"Darling, I know your goodness, and could trust any thing to it. But still I say cling to her. Make every allowance for her. Never quarrel with her whatever she may do. I think of your happiness more than hers when I say this. To quarrel with one's own blood is to cut through one's own heart. I know it."

He said no more, and I did not break his silence, for I was pondering what could have induced him to speak in so unwonted a manner just then.

Mrs. Skettle tapped at the door in another minute, and whispered to me that Mr. Gurley had arrived.

"What is the matter?" asked my grandfather.

"Mr. Gurley is here, grandfather, and he would like to see you," I answered, timidly.

For an instant an expression of annoyance crossed his face, but my air of embarrassment

and pain made him look at the interruption differently, and he answered cordially, "I shall very much like to see him."

Directly Mrs. Skettle had departed to conduct Mr. Gurley up stairs my grandfather took my hand, and, with a reassuring smile, said, "You sent for Gurley. Thank you, Tibby. You did quite right. In all your life you have been a great comfort to me."

I left Mr. Gurley alone with my grandfather till the ringing of his bell summoned me.

"My dear," said my grandfather, with increased difficulty, when I answered the summons, "Mr. Gurley tells me that his friend Mr. Choate is in the tea-room. Ask him if he will have the goodness to pay me a visit."

I had never seen Mr. Choate, knowing of him only as the first surgeon of Laughton, and as "the young man who played such an insufferable game of whist." Though my grandfather called him "young," Mr. Choate had seen at least fifty years, and appeared to me (when I found him conversing in the tea-room with Mrs. Skettle and Etty) a good-looking, well-mannered, burly gentleman.

"Will you, Sir, let me conduct you to my grandfather's room?" I said.

"My dear Miss Tree," he answered, in an honest, manly voice, that was at the same time loud and gentle, "I am delighted to hear he will allow me the pleasure of seeing him."

From this reply I saw that Mr. Choate was aware of my dear grandfather's antagonism to him, and that notwithstanding the chances in favor of his visit being unacceptable, he had come out twelve miles that inclement night in the hope that he might be allowed to do good. I knew that Mr. Choate was neither in want of patients nor at all the man to seek them simply out of considerations of self-interest.

"Ah, my dear Sir!" exclaimed my grandfather, raising himself in his bed on Mr. Choate's entry, and greeting him with the cordial suavity of departed manners, "I am delighted to see you in my house. I thank you for coming, for I want to assure you" (and as he spoke a twinkle of amusement and conciliatory animation played in my dear grandfather's eye) "that after all I am of opinion that your game was the right one. Under the circumstances your trump was the card to play."

"Ah, Sir!" returned Mr. Choate, with nice tact, "my game was the right one, but I played it in the wrong way. And I am greatly indebted to you for frankly telling me so years since."

A tear rolled down each of my grandfather's cheeks, and his lips twitched; and then, holding forth both his hands to his kind-hearted guest, he exclaimed, "What little trumpery things keep good fellows apart in this strange world! But it is too late now; I shall never play another rubber with you."

At these words I slipped out of the room to pace up and down the oak-gallery with a heart beating fast from terror; for the tone in which my dear grandfather had uttered these last simple words informed me that he knew and sympathized with my worst apprehensions.

And the terrible blow fell so suddenly!

Ere another morning dawned his life was no longer ours.

A week passed, and I and Etty stood side by

side in Lymm church, and saw the coffin of our dear grandfather lowered to a place beside his father's.

Dear, dear grandfather! my first true friend! simple, stainless, guileless gentleman! how, as the pen falters in my hand, do all the minutest circumstances of that awful night and solemn day stand out upon my memory clear and sharp! How do your words come from the silence of thrice ten years—"Whatever happens to you in life—whatever clouds may rise over you, whatever temptations you may have to resist, let nothing separate you from Etty. Cling to her; make her cling to you."

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT NEXT?

My grandfather left a will—a very simple one. All his debts were to be paid, and the residue of his property, whatever it might be, was to be paid over to me. This brief will, of which Mr. Gurley was sole executor, was made during the last year of the testator's life. At first, it surprised and even pained me; but Mr. Gurley's explanations soon caused me to regard it with different feelings.

Up to the time of his death the Reverend Solomon Easy had maintained the appearance of comfortable circumstances, if not of wealth. As Gerent of the college he had a good residence and a stipend of £100 per annum. His vicarage gave him £200 per annum, and he was proprietor of Sandhill—a farm comprising a hundred and eighty acres of productive *mixed* soil land, and taking its name of Sandhill, not from the poverty of its texture, but simply because it was lighter than "the heavy lands" around it. A clergyman with such ostensible resources and no expensive tastes manifest to general observation, would even now, in "the corn country," be looked at as "a warm man." A person who "owns land" is, in a rural district, always reputed to be richer than a neighbor who has thrice his wealth invested in the funds, and such other less palpable forms of stock.

It had never occurred to me to speculate as to the amount and nature of my grandfather's possessions. Beyond a vague but most comfortable sense of security from the hardships of very straitened circumstances, which security, I presumed, I and Etty would enjoy during the course of our lives, I had not had a thought about money matters. When I heard my grandfather's curt will read, I at first supposed myself the possessor of some considerable wealth, and was pained that my dear grandfather had seen fit to leave all of it to me, and none of it to Etty. The course of a few days, however, showed me that I was in error, and enlightened me that, far from being well provided for, I and my sister were only just removed from being very, very poor.

Mr. Gurley calculated that the sale of all my grandfather's effects, and the payment of his debts, would reduce his estate to £250 or £300. If the property sold well, there might be a surplus of £500, but I must not be too sanguine in my expectations of such a result.

My face showed Mr. Gurley my surprise at this announcement.

"I do not wonder at your astonishment," he said. "But poor Mr. Easy fell into embarrassed circumstances through his own good-nature and mistaken sense of honor. In business affairs good-nature and fine honor should never be allowed full play, Miss Tree! Now there was no earthly reason why Mr. Easy should have refused that annuity he might at one period of his life have secured on the Laughton Abbey estate. There was no earthly reason why Mr. Easy should have gone on advancing large sums of money to his son-in-law—your lamented father, Miss Tree—when his reckless and incurable extravagance had been proved beyond a doubt. There was still less to say in defense of his absurd (excuse the strength of the word) conduct in paying off Captain Tree's debts, on the demise of that gallant gentleman, under the impression that if they remained unpaid they would be a stigma of shame on you and Miss Etty, then a babe at her nurse's breast. It is such a pity, Miss Tree, that men of honor won't confine their sentiments to questions of honor, but *will* mix them up with affairs of business. Half the misery of this world, Miss Tree, is caused by gentlemen troubling themselves about the course most fit for gentlemen to take, when they ought only to be looking out sharp for pence, shillings, and pence."

"I honor my grandfather for his conduct, Mr. Gurley," I said. "Don't speak slightly of him, Sir. He was your friend, and never spoke so of you."

"Slightly!" exclaimed Mr. Gurley with natural warmth. "Heaven forbid I should speak slightly of him! He was the finest-spirited man that ever lived! I was not speaking slightly of him, but only of his way of *doing business*."

Mr. Gurley was a hard man, but far from being devoid of kindness. I never felt his hardness, and angularity, and self-complacent abruptness more than I did when he talked with me freely about my dear grandfather's affairs, and in his character of "business man" laid his square hands plump on all the tender and most sensitive points of my affections. And yet, though he was continually making me wince, he obtained a strong hold over my confidence, and I felt that he would act to me as a wise adviser, and as a true friend.

He came over frequently to Farnham Cobb during the month following my grandfather's death, visiting Sandhill and making arrangements for the sale of that place and all the stock upon it. He moreover brought over Mr. Choate with him to prescribe for Etty, who was pale and dejected, and to look at Mrs. Skettle, who had become alarmingly indisposed.

Now that sickness and death had entered our once happy home, it seemed that those dread powers were determined to maintain their abode there. In ten days after her first attack Mrs. Skettle followed her old friend and master to the silent land. I and Etty felt only slightly the loss and the awe of the quiet old lady's death. It was another dark stroke in our life-picture; but it was made at a time when it could not add to the gloom of desolation around us.

Another month passed. Mrs. Skettle had been buried ten days, and my dear grandfather we had not seen for nearly seven weeks.

"Well, my dear Miss Tree, what will you do?" asked Mr. Gurley.

What would I do? He was quite right for putting the question. He was kind in troubling himself about my future steps, and yet I winced under the inquiry. It was really kind, but it seemed cruel.

"My dear young lady," continued Mr. Gurley, "you must look the world in the face. You see, when a woman dies, all we have to do is to put her chair in the corner; but when a man dies, as a general rule, a woman has to be turned out of doors. The time is already growing short for you to remain here. Mr. Easy's successor, as Gerent and Vicar, has already written to me twice, inquiring when he can take possession of the house. He is going to marry, and he wants to be at work, papering and painting and restoring the College, so that it may be in fit order to receive his bride. That's the way the world goes. See-saw—one up, another down. A scramble—one gets, another loses. A game of 'Catch-a-corner'—one in, another out. But I told the gentleman, my dear Miss Tree, that he shouldn't annoy you—as long as you had a legal right to remain in this house—no, not if he were the Sultan of Turkey, and wished to bring all his harem to Farnham Cobb."

It was not the season of the year for agricultural auctions; but land can be sold at any time, and Mr. Gurley had found a tenant for Sandhill, who was ready to take all the live and dead stock upon it at a liberal valuation. The task of disposing of my grandfather's estate had thus been rendered comparatively simple and easy, and had already been accomplished on fair terms. The result was, that after paying off a heavy mortgage on Sandhill, after liquidating various small debts, after paying an unexpectedly large sum for "disapidations" to my grandfather's successor, and after refunding to Mr. Gurley money which he had in the course of years advanced to my grandfather on personal security, my grandfather's executor had a sum of £324 8s. 5½d. to pay over to me.

What would I do?

"I need not point out to you, Miss Tree," observed Mr. Gurley, "that the interest of such a sum of money as that can not be made to support you and your sister."

"Of course not. I must work. But what can I do?"

"Spoken sensibly, Miss Tree. You must work. Your sister one day will marry. Beautiful creature she is! But in the mean time she must work too. Julian Gower won't be able to marry her while he is in South America; and it is not unlikely that he'll have to wait several years after his five years there are finished ere he can support a wife and family. She must work too. Now of course you'd like to live together. It follows, therefore, that you must try to find work that you can do together."

I cordially assented to this statement of the case, and thanked him for putting it so plainly.

"But what are we to do? What can we do?" I asked.

"Miss Tree, I hope you won't think me a busy-body," replied Mr. Gurley, with a needless and unusual attempt at an apology. "I have been trying to answer those questions for you. Indeed Choate and I have taken the liberty of talking it over. Rufus Choate is a sensible and

kind fellow, and an excellent man of business, though there is no doubt that he was, years back, the most insufferable whist-player that ever took thirteen cards in hand. He used to play as if the chief object of the game was to show the three men he played with that he thought them fools. But he doesn't do so now. He is a capital fellow. Now Rufus Choate has two little girls. I have three little girls. Choate suggested to me that if you and your sister found it necessary to go out as governesses, one of you might like to be governess in his family, and the other might take the same post in mine. You and your sister would thus see almost as much of each other as you do now; for Choate and I are very intimate—almost like brothers, and our children really hardly know which of our two houses is their own. That was Choate's suggestion."

"It was very, very kind of him," I said, warmly. "I'll write and thank him this very day for his proposal, whether I act on it or not."

"Well, now for my part in meddling with other people's affairs," continued Mr. Gurley. "I thought over Choate's plan. Then I said to him, 'No, if we make any proposal, let it be a modification of yours. Why shouldn't Miss Tree and Miss Etty take *The Cottage* and keep a school of their own?' Choate liked the thought prodigiously. You remember the cottage, Miss Tree, the little place in the corner of the park, with the cedar-tree, and trellis-work, and gables, and fish-pond, that you admired so much last autumn? If you came there and opened a school you'd find pupils immediately. Choate and I are rather important personages in our little town; and our little girls, who would join your school instantly, would soon attract others. You might have six boarders and a whole regiment of day-pupils. By this plan you'd be mistresses of your own house; indeed, in a sort of way, you'd be living on family property. If you came to live in my house I shouldn't annoy you, because I am always in my office or driving about the country after business—and my wife would be very kind to you, because she couldn't help herself; but still you'd somehow feel yourself a stranger with us. A woman likes to be head of a house. She likes a little power. If there's any good in her, she enjoys deciding whether the servants may go out to tea, and every now and then having all the window-blinds washed when they don't want it."

"Mr. Gurley," I said, rising with an effort, and trying to be calm, though I felt hot tears on my cheeks, "God has indeed raised up friends for the orphans."

"Pooh, my dear," returned Mr. Gurley, flurried for the minute out of his customary sharp manner, "don't talk so. You women always will take such romantic views of mere matters of business. Well, well, we are friends. That's all right. Let's always keep so. Don't you remember dear Mr. Easy's words, 'What little trumpery things keep good fellows apart in this strange world?' I shall never forget them. No, as long as I live I shall never forget them. They were an entire life of sermons."

And all of a sudden Mr. Gurley remembered that he hadn't seen his horse rubbed down. He'd just go to the stable and see if Isaac Stoddart had rubbed him down. And in another mo-

ment he had run out of the room, leaving me to cry out my gratitude by myself, like the weak, blubbing little fool I was.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD SCHOOLS AND NEW.

MR. GURLEY's proposal was not only so kind, but was in every respect so excellent, that Etty and I did not hesitate to act on it promptly. To my suggestion that she would prefer we should wait till the mail should bring us Julian's opinion ere we took any steps definitively committing us to establish a school at Laughton, she replied that, as he would certainly approve our undertaking, and cordially congratulate us on having such a field of profitable exertion offered to us, we had better waste no time, and had better write him a full account of what we *meant* to do, not what we *wished* to do. My judgment accorded with her decision, but still I felt it right more than once again to suggest that we should refer our intended movements to Julian before making them irrevocably. But she would not admit of such a line of action.

"It would be making the dear fellow of too much importance!" she said, in her old playful way, when we had for the last time reconsidered the question. "Bless me! he has no right yet to dictate to me what I am to do, and what I am to leave undone. Moreover, though he will, if he continue to behave himself properly, be my master one of these days, he is not and never will be yours."

Poor girl, she little dreamed how completely he was my master! how many years he had been so!

I did not chide her for her levity; for I was glad once again to see the old merry light in her eyes and on her lips. And I had already grown accustomed to hear her speak of Julian with a playfulness that seemed to me almost irreverent. I knew that in her heart she cherished a high ideal of a wife's character and duties, and that with solemn earnestness she was bent on being all that she understood by the words "a good wife." But still it not seldom jarred against my feelings to listen to the light vein in which she would prattle about "her naughty boy," "her handsome slave," "her quaint, blundering Julian." His deep, generous passion, too, seemed often more a source of amusement than a proper cause for lively gratitude to God and to him. I recalled, as so many visions of pure and holy delight, the occasions when he had been stirred by my words, or had been manifestly satisfied with my conduct; but she, pleased as she was with them, could all but jest at his more extravagant expressions of admiration. It may not be supposed that she betrayed any unseemly personal vanity, or ever boasted with unfeminine triumph of her influence over him. Of such conduct she was incapable. But in various ways—too trifling and too subtle for me to be able to describe them in words—she unconsciously betrayed that she regarded his love as "a mere matter of course," a tribute naturally her due—and that, in their relations, it was she who *gave*, and he who *received*. I tried not to think so, for the thought seemed something that

might one day grow into a severe and uncharitable judgment of my only sister; but I could not escape the pain of suspecting that she rated the happiness conferred by herself on him more highly than the honor and joy conferred by him on her. And how natural it was that such a traitorous self-complacence should creep into her young mind, when every mirror that she passed flattered her more than ever Julian's words could!

So the important question was decided; and for the next few weeks I and Etty were busy in making preparations for our new vocation. Such of our old furniture as was of a kind to be useful to us we moved to "The Cottage." Many things we had to buy. "The instrument" which my dear grandfather held in such high estimation, though its notes were all expiring beyond a chance of recovery, we took with us—partly out of a feeling that our "possible little pupils" might use it to learn their five notes and scales on, and partly out of sheer love for the poor old rattling sideboard; but we felt it necessary to invest £40 (an enormous sum we deemed it) in a brand-new cottage-piano, bought at the nearest cathedral town through the agency of Mr. Gurley.

Other heavy expenses we had in furnishing our new residence, and getting a proper tradestock, as Mr. Gurley called it; so that when we spent our first evening at home in "The Cottage," and counted up our money, Etty and I found that we had in hand for current expenses very little more than £100.

But we had before us a reassuring prospect. Through the interest of Mr. Gurley and Mr. Choate we started with five boarders (six being the number for which we had accommodation) and eight little girls as day-pupils—five of them being the children of the kind-hearted doctor and lawyer. Our school, therefore, was a commercial success from the day on which it was opened. All professional success is pleasant; and ours was the more so from the fact that we received convincing proof from the leading inhabitants of Laughton that the town was in want of a good girls' school, and was really glad to receive us into its population.

What a long letter was Etty's next monthly budget to Julian! and how much more cheerful than its three immediate precursors!

And thus we turned our backs on Farnham Cobb: quitting it with many tears and a vague discomforting prevision that the next twenty years of our lives would have more sorrow than had marked the tranquil days we had passed in the dear old College.

Farnham Cobb is a very different place now from what it was in my girlhood. My grandfather's successor was of "a new school," and was very much shocked with all the arrangements of the College and the parish. He immediately introduced sweeping reforms and alterations of all sorts. He found out that the College was "a flagrant abuse;" we had only found it a very happy home. And active measures were taken to convert it from its condition of flagrant abuse into the highest possible state of efficiency. The kindling, and the potatoes, and the gardening tools were taken out of the inquest-room—once more and forever. The brick floor of the inquest-room was cleaned with a new

scrub-brush, and a prodigious quantity of full-er's-earth. The desks and forms were all cleansed with another new scrub-brush, and a liberal supply of soft soap. The ceilings and walls were covered over so thick with new white-wash. The dusty, stumpy old rod was chopped up and burned as an abominable remnant of the barbarous ages. The cobwebs in the windows were so vigorously attacked that more than a score panes were shivered by the renovating broom-handle. The statutes were brought out and carefully perused; and in consequence of this examination, "Declarations" were forthwith held four times a year. But Mr. Ardent (my grandfather's successor) feeling it unnecessary to observe the directions of the statutes, in respect of costume, as punctiliously as my dear grandfather had done, did not provide himself with knee-breeches, and black silk stockings, and shoes with silver buckles. The statutes said nothing about the feast of cakes and ale to the villagers after "Declarations;" so that pleasant but rather troublesome and somewhat costly usage was discontinued. It would take a volume to name all the changes for the better made by Mr. Ardent.

I believe him to have been a good man; I know he was a very zealous one. But he was wrong, and guilty of cruel injustice in saying that my dear grandfather neglected his duty, and was a disgrace to his profession. My dear grandfather did no such thing, was no such thing. True, he was a clergyman of an old and obsolete school. In his youth he rode with the hounds, and he followed game, with a gun in his hands and a keeper at his heels, as long as bodily vigor enabled him to enjoy strong exercise. He was sometimes to be seen at the county races, and he liked "gentlemanly whist." He did not think himself out of place wrestling or playing camp with the farmers, and artisans, and workmen on the "four parishes' common." He had to the last only one service each Sunday in his church. But he neither did harm nor caused harm in others; on the contrary he daily wrought much good: his life was a modest example of manly gentleness and exquisite charity: he did not feel it necessary to be so active in doctrinal instruction as his successor deemed it right to be, but with a never-flagging and unobtrusive sympathy with the poor (which I fervently hope is as common now as it was in "the good old time"), he was the beloved personal associate of every old man and old woman, and every young man, and every young woman, and every little child in his parish. He did not make formal visits on his cottagers. He lounged in upon them, sometimes in his slippers and a brown-holland coat (when the weather was hot), and sat gossiping with them, for hours together, about their children, their spinning, their bees, their garden-stuff, their bargains, their friendships, and their quarrels; winning their hearts because he *really* enjoyed their society, and *actually* felt an interest in their concerns—not merely out of sense of duty pretending that such was the case.

Such a man was my dear grandfather; and when Mr. Ardent reflected on him as a sluggard in his Master's work he was greatly in error, and did injustice to a dead man, not from want of rectitude of intention, but from taking a nar-

row view of extinct manners, which should always be viewed liberally or not considered at all.

I should be sorry if these last pages led any reader to suppose that I would depreciate the merits, or speak, save with the most sincere veneration, of the modern school of clergymen. Far from it. They worthily represent the goodness of this generation; but so in like manner did their predecessors represent what was best in the old time. I have lived long enough to see many changes. Sometimes the changes, I admit it, have given me pain; but even when they have shocked my prejudices and treated harshly old and tender associations I have endeavored to hope for the best possible consequences from them, to judge their promoters charitably, and to place a generous reliance in times and ways to which I feel I do not exactly belong. If I have a tendency to complain egotistically about any thing, it is that I do not find a corresponding generosity always displayed to myself. I belong to "the good old time," my affections having been enlisted in its defense in my earliest childhood. I love "the good old time," and it does acutely pain me to hear, every day of my life, careless people attribute all the possible and impossible vices of human society to it, simply because it hadn't a parliamentary reform bill, had no railways, disliked Frenchmen and political economists, paid the Prince Regent's debts, and drank a great deal too much wine. I have therefore, under much provocation, made bold to advance a modest plea for that "good old time," and to defend the character of one whose virtues taught me to venerate the clergy of the old school.

Surely there are some who sympathize with me!

CHAPTER VIII.

A GENTLEWOMAN OF ANCIENT DESCENT.

LAUGHTON was very different from Farnham Cobb. It had but three thousand inhabitants; yet it was the largest town Etty had ever seen, and it appeared to her in the light of a metropolis. The reader can hardly imagine how exciting its society and events were to me and my sister. Having lived all our days in a secluded corner of a fat, tranquil county—a corner that could be only approached by rutted lanes—where we had no diversity of pursuits, or amusements, or companions, we felt scarcely less in a whirl, during our first six weeks of residence in Laughton, than the daughter of a county house feels at the opening of her first London season.

Mrs. Gurley was very kind to us. She took us by the hand as her especial *protégées*, and made an evening party for the express purpose of introducing us to the principal people of the town. It makes me smile to remember how we had recourse to Mrs. Gurley for advice as to our most trivial movements. She was, like me, little in stature; but she was also very fat, and had small, laughing black eyes that expressed the genuine benevolence of her disposition. She had in girlhood been well-looking; and that universal good-nature, which caused her to see only the brightest side of the world and of every object in it, preserved her from the painful knowledge that time had changed the clear brunette

complexion of her youth into a deep gamboge tan, and had so increased the girth of her once piquant figure that Etty was really almost justified in saying that to walk round the dear lady was a very good day's exercise.

Mrs. Gurley, over and above her imperturbable temper and active amiability, participated largely in her husband's shrewdness and common sense. A more judicious, as well as cordial friend, it was impossible for me and Etty to have found. Laughton, like every other little town, and every great town too, had its sets, and cliques, and rivalries, and classes separated from, yet running into, each other. In entering a new world the success of an adventurer depends very much on the first start. A bad introduction, leading at the outset to a few injudicious friendships, is often the source of endless embarrassment and permanent injury to a stranger settling in a new community. Now, had it not been for Mrs. Gurley, I and Etty should never have dreamed of this; for at Farnham Cobb, and in that secluded part of the corn country in which we had been brought up, there was no "society," in the most artificial sense of the word, and we had known and spoken familiarly to every one who crossed our path without ever for a moment debating whether it was prudent to do so. At Laughton we found it was necessary to be very careful about "our position" until it was exactly ascertained and generally allowed.

The dissenters (there were no dissenters at Farnham Cobb) of Laughton held little communion with church-goers; but notwithstanding that Etty and I were known to be the granddaughters of a clergyman, the ladies of the dissenting interest called on us, inviting us to tea, and offering us their children as day-pupils. Left to ourselves, Etty and I would have gratefully accepted these hospitable advances, and snapped at the proffered additions to our class. But Mrs. Gurley fortunately came to our rescue, and saved us from the grave disaster of giving offense to the rector's family, and the best families of the town, by holding an unwise intercourse with the non-conformist sects. I can not say I liked it when I discovered the necessity for this caution. I should unquestionably have preferred either that there had been no dissenters, or that I had been at liberty to deal with them without reference to their peculiar opinions and social position; but I and Etty had to take the world as we found it. We had not settled the world's ways and institutions; and if they were in fault, it was no appointed work of ours to reform them. The laws of society were to us the opinions of our elders and superiors, and the wishes of our benefactors; and like modest young women we did our best to regulate our conduct by them. So we wisely trusted to Mrs. Gurley's guidance; and she, with her inseparable kindness and perfect knowledge of the world in which she lived, showed us how to keep the dissenting ladies at a distance and yet give them no needless pain.

Mrs. Gurley had great claims on our gratitude, and I am pleased to recollect that those claims were fully recognized by us. But still it makes me smile to remember how the little round lady instructed us in the veriest A B C of polite life. She prevailed upon us to discard our old clumsily-made bonnets, and scant skirts, and thick shoes, and marvelous cloaks—which at Farnham

Cobb had been regarded as being in the highest fashion—and place ourselves in the hands of the chief milliner of Laughton, who had a box of London goods by nearly every "down" coach that entered the town. I shall never forget how delighted and nervous Etty and I were over our first really well-constructed bonnets, and shoes of Paris kid, and silk cloaks, and Dent's kid gloves. We were thoroughly pleased with them, although they were black, and my dear grandfather had been dead quite six months. What talk we had over the "new things!" and how we criticised and admired each other in our new dresses "all stuffed out" with a very simple apparatus that was at Farnham Cobb completely unknown to us. The first time we went to church in our new attire we thought every one was looking at us—and, to be sure, every one *did* look at us. Mrs. Gurley, too, procured us our first calling-cards, and instructed us in the proper way of using them. At Farnham Cobb I question whether I ever saw a calling-card, save those dear Julian had his own name engraved on, at his uncle Gower's request, for the purpose of leaving them on his grand aunt in Russell Square. One of the cards he gave me as a curiosity, and I have it among my private treasures to this day.

We had scarcely opened our school when a great piece of good fortune happened to me. The post of organist to the Laughton church became vacant, and through Mr. Gurley's influence with the rate-payers it was conferred on me. The salary of £30 per annum was an acceptable addition to our income; but even more acceptable was the privilege of entering the church by a private key whenever we liked for the purpose of practicing on the organ, which was a noble one, presented to the parish by Sir Marmaduke Clare. Etty had quite as much command over the organ as myself, though I was the *official* organist; and we used to take turns both in practicing and in performing to the congregation during divine service. After the duties of our school were over it was a refreshing relaxation to enter the church and break the solemn silence of the sacred place with floods of yet more solemn music. In the evenings of summer, and when the autumnal moons sent their rays across the dark aisles, Etty and I, having first seen our "boarders" in bed and asleep, used to steal under the cedar-tree of our pretty garden, and crossing over the road, enter the church together for an hour or two hours' enjoyment. We would play to each other by turns. The townspeople soon heard of our custom, and they began to walk in the church-yard during the evenings for the sake of hearing the music within the walls. But our auditors never embarrassed us. As soon as the organ ceased to send forth sounds, the ten, or twenty, or thirty listeners (collected on the precinct) quickly dispersed; and when Etty and I emerged from the church we were still alone, and—thanks to the delicacy of those to whom we had been playing—we recrossed the road and re-entered our garden unwatched.

It was not long ere we discovered that we were held in much estimation among the townsmen as young ladies of high quality. Mr. Gurley and Mr. Choate, wishing to secure us the best possible footing in the higher families of the town and its immediate vicinity, had spoken of us as mem-

bers of the Laughton Abbey family. Perhaps they were not wise in all respects for doing so; but their course of action was entered upon from the kindest motives to us, and it would have been difficult to assign any reason why they should have refrained from mentioning a fact which was well known to others besides themselves. They did not know that my grandfather had brought us up in perfect ignorance of our near relationship to the once great, but now fallen, county family; and that, up to the very time of her commencing her residence in "The Cottage," Etty had never been told she was the grand-niece of Sir Marmaduke Clare, had never even heard that distinguished person's name.

Among the first families to call upon us at "The Cottage" was the rector. The Rev. Augustus Butterworth was the rector's name; and as his living was worth nearly £2000 per annum, and as he was a county magistrate, he was an important personage in the town and for five miles round it. Indeed, when there was no "family" at the Abbey, Mr. Butterworth was Lord-Lieutenant of Laughton and all its dependencies. A gaunt, florid, and sleepy man, he was a widower with three expensive sons in the army, and three maiden sisters of advanced years, who lived in the rectory, and drove out daily in their brother's huge yellow barouche, with a powdered footman—powdered exactly as the Abbey footmen were—balancing himself on a board behind, and flattening his nose with a silver-headed cane as he stared at the coachman (also powdered) on the box. As the rectory was at the other end of the town, and at least a mile and a half distant from the church, this equipage always brought the rectory party down to the Sunday services—the Rev. Augustus Butterworth sitting arrayed in his canonicals, and his three maiden sisters of advanced years looking rather thin and very stately.

These three ladies had the reputation in Laughton of being very proud. Indeed Mrs. Gurley, in privacy and strict confidence, told me and Etty that they were as "proud as Lucifer, and as weak as gnel." But they were very affable to us when they called, though their big carriage nearly filled up our little garden, and the finest branch of our cedar-tree caught their footman's splendid gold-laced hat, and sent it rolling into the fish-pond.

"What a sweet, pretty place!" observed Miss Argentine Butterworth, graciously, having surveyed the garden while her two sisters were getting into the carriage, and Etty and I, to do full honor to our guests, were standing under the clematis which covered our porch to witness their departure. "Really an exquisite place! and so delightful for you to have such a view of your family property."

Of the three sisters Miss Argentine Butterworth was the most talkative. She spoke in a full and authoritative tone, and was prone to state matters known to every body in a voice implying that, till she opened her lips, they were known only to herself.

"The park and abbey form a beautiful scene," I said.

"Ay!" responded Miss Argentine in her most magnificent style, "and it is not simply their beauty that you enjoy. You have a thousand sweet, domestic associations and a fine historic

pride to endear that noble prospect to your affections. In these republican times the pleasures which a properly constituted mind derives from the contemplation of ancestral dignity are frequently made the subject of vulgar ridicule. But gentlewomen of ancient descent, like ourselves, Miss Tree, are not likely to show favor to a pernicious heresy."

I was rather uneasy at this speech. I was afraid Etty would say something that would betray her ignorance of our connection with the Abbey family, and so necessitate an awkward explanation of a family secret. To tell the truth also, I did not care to sink in Miss Argentine Butterworth's estimation. I would not deceive her, but why should I present her with a series of needless communications which would only make her feel less kindly to me? It was, therefore, with a sensation of relief that I saw Miss Argentine take her seat and bow us a farewell ere Etty had spoken another word.

The huge yellow equipage rolled out of the garden, bearing the grand footman behind, with his magnificent hat, rescued from the fish-pond, and (from the combined effects of cold water and subsequent brushing) shining like a new piece of patent leather.

"In the name, Tibby," exclaimed Etty, opening her eyes to their extreme width, as soon as the carriage had turned into the road—"In the name of all the mysteries on the earth, and in the earth, and in the waters under the earth, what did that old cockatoo mean by calling you 'a gentlewoman of ancient descent?' I have heard poor dear Mrs. Skettle say, 'When gentlefolks meet, compliments pass;' but I never dreamed of such stuff as that. A gentlewoman of ancient descent! Who ever heard such nonsense? Mrs. Gurley is always preaching to us about 'the rules of good society;' I'll ask her if it's according to the 'rules of good society' for two ladies, clothed and in their right minds, who know just nothing of each other, to call each other all sorts of polite names? What's the matter with the woman, Tibby? Tell me that. Has she escaped from Bedlam? Is she going to die and leave you a large fortune? Are you a Queen of England, and I a Princess Royal? What does it mean?"

"Hush, Etty!" I exclaimed as soon as I had nerve enough to break in upon her torrent of questions, intermingled with laughter. "Hush, Etty, you'll get us into disgrace. Some of the children will hear you."

"Bother the children!" answered Etty, flatly, stamping her little foot on the ground, just as she used to do when she played "going mad" as a little girl. "It's a half-holiday. The day-pupils are not here, and the others are busy, writing their weekly letters home."

"But, my dear Etty, you should be more cautious," I expostulated; "you must keep a curb on your tongue, and not let it run riot. Think what the consequences would be if Miss Argentine Butterworth were to hear that you had spoken of her as 'that old cockatoo?' Indeed, Etty, we must be cautious, and not shock the public sense of propriety!"

I put on my gravest air as I said this.

"Oh, my dear little 'gentlewoman of ancient descent,' how admirably you scold! you've caught quite the knack of it! If you only go on in this

way our school will be the best one all through the county. I declare we ought to raise the terms. Not call her 'that old cockatoo?' Then why does she wear a pink bonnet and a blue parasol?"

What was I to do with her? I could not be angry—she was so bewitchingly and roguishly beautiful as she ran on this mad way. I could almost have cried with vexation, and I knew my tears would reduce her to submission.

It was, as she said, a half-holiday. So I put my arms round her waist and pulled her along with me into the summer-house.

"There, Miss Madeap," I said, when she had taken a seat quietly by my side, "here is the park, and up on the hill stands the mansion which Sir Marmaduke Clare restored and beautified. Listen to me while I tell you a story about it and him."

Then I told her faithfully and accurately as I knew it the story of the two brothers—the story of Sir Marmaduke Clare and the Rev. Solomon Easy.

CHAPTER IX.

A WISE RESOLUTION.

My story had an attentive auditor, and from that day Etty frequently reverted to its subject, which had a strong captivation for my mind as well as hers. There are few objects that appeal more forcibly to the imagination of inexperienced persons than a palace surrounded by a noble park. It is one of the most imposing and beautiful forms in which wealth can be displayed; and wealth has a fascination for human creatures of every rank, and pursuit, and disposition. So beautiful and magnificent an abode as Laughton Abbey neither Etty nor I had elsewhere seen, and days before she learned that the fair domain belonged to her kindred she had constructed many pretty romances about its history and owners. A vision of a beautiful heiress had occupied her idle moments. And more than once the thought had crossed her mind as to what she would do with so splendid an estate if a benign fairy were to present it to her. She told me so, with much energy of manner and many blushes for her absurd folly.

The charms of the beautiful landscape that surrounded our cottage were now, both to her and me, enhanced by the sort of personal interest that we felt we had a right to take in it. We contracted a habit of speaking of the Abbey estate as belonging to "our cousins," though we had never known those cousins. It will doubtless raise the reader's derision; but candor compels me to confess that I cherished a silly pride in my distant relations whom I well knew to be destined to as humble a lot as our own, and, in all probability, to a less useful career than that by which I was earning my bread. We borrowed from Mr. Gurley his two ponderous volumes of County History and read the chapter which relates the grandeur and achievements of the Clares in former centuries, long before my dear grandfather's unworthy brother had seized their wealth by an act of base perfidy; and by the time we returned the history to our benefactor we almost conceived ourselves to be two unfortunate princesses. Fortunately for us the gratification

of this contemptible vanity was only the amusement of our leisure and private moments, and did not lure us from an honest discharge of our daily duties; so it did not injure others, though it did both me and Etty grievous harm.

The shooting season was fast approaching, and the Abbey was undergoing preparation for an influx of visitors. The place had been hired for three years by Arthur Byfield Petersham, the only son and heir of Mr. Petersham, the great banker and loan-contractor of the house of "Petersham and Blake." Week after week the county papers gave us fresh particulars concerning the importance of that powerful firm, and the gentleman who was to succeed to its accumulations. Mr. Petersham, senior, was an East India director, an active and venerable member of the House of Commons, and the owner of land in several different counties, by virtue of which he had at his command five votes in the Commons. It was remarked that his son, Arthur Byfield Petersham, had no place in Parliament, though it was manifest that he might long since on his father's nomination have commanded that dignity. The rumor spread that the young man was anxious of securing the representation of Laughton, and that his wish to do so was one reason why he had hired the Abbey. It was also understood that if Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham's residence at Laughton should prove agreeable to him, he contemplated purchasing the estate at the sale which would take place on the expiration of his three years' lease.

Mr. Gurley, as steward of the Abbey estate, was of course well-informed on the antecedents and position of the Petersham family. Lombard Street had known the house of Petersham for more than a hundred and fifty years. The commercial prosperity of the house had been of slow but unchecked growth until the closing years of Napoleon's career, when, in consequence of transactions with continental powers, it had made rapid advances and reached its present eminence. At the close of the last century Mr. Blake was taken into partnership, and the house became "Petersham and Blake." The first Mr. Petersham of that partnership had died long since, being the grandsire of Arthur Byfield Petersham. Mr. Blake also had died some eight or ten years back, leaving enormous wealth behind him, which an only daughter, Miss Olive Blake, and the children that should be born to her would, under certain conditions, enjoy. There was some sort of family compact that the heiress of the one partner, and the heir of the other—viz., Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham and Miss Olive Blake—should unite by marriage the fortunes amassed by their fathers.

Before the arrival of "the family" Etty and I, accompanied by our boarders, made an expedition to the Abbey, and calling on Mrs. Tate easily prevailed on that good woman to take us through the rooms I had about ten months before visited with my dear grandfather. I particularly directed Etty's attention to the portraits of Gertrude Clare and Sir Marmaduke Clare; and then we minutely inspected the gardens surrounding the mansion—passing through the pineries and conservatories, the garden of the fountains, and the quaint, old, geometric garden, with its grotesquely-cut box-trees and fences fashioned by topiary art (which had existed for generations, long be-

fore the old red-brick hall had been covered with an Italian front, and enlarged with wings), the tennis-court, the bowling-green, the grottoes, and the maze shrubberies.

We enjoyed our excursion very much at the time; but when the day was at an end, and when, our pupils in bed, we sat down to our customary quiet supper of fruit and rice-milk, we were both so out of spirits that we could not partake of any thing. The portraits of Gertrude and Sir Marmaduke had brought back vividly to me the recollection of my dear grandfather—how he had loved and been betrayed; how in his serene and white old age he had gazed with bitter anguish on the semblance of the fair creature who had set his life wrong at its outset! It was scarce credible that he had been dead so short a time, and I had made so many new interests, and found so many new cares, and given myself up to so many new vanities, that I only now and then thought of him!

"Tibby," said my sister, breaking my mournful reflections, "do have the supper taken away. I do not want it. I am thinking of dear grandpapa, and thinking that I am a very wicked, heartless girl." And having said this, she fell into a long fit of that hysteric weeping which young and delicate girls are liable to when they are deeply agitated.

"Oh, Tibby, Tibby, what a cruel life was his! what cruel sorrow he had to endure!" the dear child continued. "Only to think of it! If I had but known it, I should have been a better child to him! If he were but alive again, I should know how to comfort him!"

"Darling," I said, "sooner or later every human heart finds its allotted sorrow. If the grief appointed to our dear grandfather was far beyond that appointed to most men, his was a noble nature—able to suffer it without complaining, and endure it without deterioration."

"Don't talk calmly about it, Tibby," she answered, passionately. "Your words won't comfort me, for I can't bear them. To have his love basely robbed from him by his own brother! As I saw that hateful portrait in the gallery to-day it made me shiver. Oh, my poor, poor grandfather! Even suppose his brother had not with vile perfidy abused his confidence, but had *unconsciously* stepped in before him—even then how hard his fate! Think, Tibby, of me and Julian: how could I feel as a sister to you, if you, ignorant that I loved Julian, had won his heart from me?"

Addressed to *me*, these words were literally so terrible that I started from my seat by her side. I can not even now account for my sensations, but can only state them without reasoning upon them. For a moment a feeling of acute, vindictive resentment toward the innocent cause of my hidden sorrow shot through my breast. I am right to use the word. It shot *through* my breast. It did not stay there; but was there for such a speck of time that it is a marvel how it affected me so deeply, that I even now can recall it as vividly as I felt it. Had it held the mastery of me for a single minute, I do verily believe that all the good would have been driven out of my nature, and that my whole after-life would have been scarred and wasted by passion. But an angel was by my side protecting me, and saying in clear silver tones, "Whatever tempta-

tions you may have to resist, let nothing separate you from Etty. Cling to her; make her cling to you. To quarrel with one's own blood is to cut through one's own heart."

"Had such been the case, dear Etty," said I, resuming my seat by her side, "you would not have left off feeling for me as a sister. You would have been twice a sister to me—adding to your former love for me all the love you had for Julian."

I then led her to talk of Julian; and when she had dried her tears and grown calm, I induced her to bring out her collection of his letters, and we read them together, as we had more than once read them before.

"Etty, darling," I said, when we had finished the South American epistles, "your birthday is fast coming. When it has arrived I'll make you a present of all the letters Julian ever wrote to me. You ought to have them."

I sat by Etty after she was in bed that night, talking to her after the old fashion; and when at a late hour I rose to give her a final kiss and to take my departure, she said, "Tibby, for *our own sakes*, I wish we had no connection with the Clares of Loughton Abbey. We can't undo the past, but let us try to forget it."

"Quite right, my dear, and bravely said. We will forget all about it," I answered.

And I went off to my bed far happier than I had been ever since that ridiculous stuff about our belonging to a grand family, and being unfortunate members of the aristocracy, had crept into my head.

CHAPTER X.

MY FIRST GREAT ACQUAINTANCE.

ABOUT a week after our excursion to Loughton Abbey Etty and I were in the school-room at "morning's lessons." Etty had the little spelling-class before her, and I was hearing the second French class say their verbs. Jessie Eastbourne was beating away at the barren keys of the old Farnham Cobb "instrument," and Mabel Rice (my best drawing-pupil) was shading in a picturesque old barn—with a superb lake, an oak-tree of the cabbage formation, and an old woman in the fore-ground. There were no Harding's "Studies" in those days, and children were put to copy the most atrocious forms of unartistic misrepresentation. Indeed, when Etty and I kept school at Loughton, the common forms (as lawyers would say) of educational proceedings were of a very crude and unelaborated kind. Mr. Gurley, whose sound practical sagacity made him in many respects a man before his generation, often told us so—using that very expression.

We were thus engaged when Etty exclaimed, "Oh, look!"

In an instant the eyes of all the college were turned to the window, and a general chorus exclaimed, "What a beautiful pony!"

"It's Mr. Petersham, the 'millionaire,'" I said, demurely, and in a tone of authority—pleased with myself for seeing so quickly the secret of the position, and almost feeling that I was imparting a valuable piece of information to my pupils. "'Tis Mr. Petersham, riding round the

park to see how he likes it." Of course I spoke not of the pony but its rider.

"Oh!" exclaimed the college, stopping work and breaking up the classes, and making the school-room a scene of unprecedented confusion.

The cause of our commotion was this: The school-room was at the end of the cottage nearest the park, not ten yards of garden lawn intervening between its principal window and the sunk fence, which separated us from the Abbey inclosure. As light was a great desideratum in the school-room, and no one was in the habit of passing before the window, which ran from the ceiling almost down to the ground, we had not furnished it with a muslin curtain or blind, but sat with no artificial material save glass between us and the timber of the outer park.

The apparition of a large and beautiful milk-white pony, led by a game-keeper, and bearing an old gentleman—and passing before our window—within twelve yards of Ety's official chair, was an occurrence justifying excitement. It was a positive spectacle for me. The pony! I had never seen such a beautiful creature! Fourteen hands high, white and rich in coat as a creamy kid glove, the muscles of its broad chest and round hind-quarters giving emphasis to the delicacy of its thin clean legs, a snuffing nostril and a curved neck, silky mane and forelock, and a dainty tread on the green turf! Such were the graces of the animal. In a very different way the rider was not less imposing. His dress, terminating in huge boots and leggings of fine black cloth, showed me at a glance that his lower extremities were well-nigh crippled with gout. Indeed I found out afterward that he had to be lifted up and put on the pony's back like a child. An ample breadth of body—it might indeed be termed corpulence—indicated that he was not averse to the pleasures of the table. But the head and face! As he passed our window at a slow walk and looked round at us, observantly but doubtless with a knowledge that mere rustics would not object to being stared at by him, I understood that intellect and high character of a certain kind are necessary for the production of a great financier and capitalist as well as any thing else that is great. The eye that glanced at us from beneath a full snowy eyebrow was black, and as keen and bright as ever a young man's could be. His face, like his body, was plump and rather more than merely well-fed; but to its regular profile, large but well-shaped mouth, and broad as well as high white brow, power, and calm self-reliance, and long-enduring purpose had given their distinctive aspect. The old man's white hair, moreover, was not long, and straight, and thin, as the gray locks of age usually are, but it came in soft curls down to the collar of his shooting-coat, and had a yellow tint that caused me to think of the rich juices, rather than the sore exhaustion, of life.

Fifty yards beyond us ran a plantation, skirting the outer park, and screening a turnip-field from the observation of the mansion on the distant hill. A covey of luckless partridges had chanced to come from the turnip-field over the fence (along which the plantation ran) for a walk in the park. Moving up silently under the fence, the white pony came down upon them before they were aware of the approaching dan-

ger. The birds ran forward and rose, and being strong in the wing they were getting away, when Mr. Petersham deliberately took the gun proffered to him by the keeper, and firing off both barrels brought down the two hindmost birds, that flew madly, and apart from each other, out of the line taken by the rest of the feathered herd. I could not help remarking that the veteran sportsman was in no hurry to take his gun, but waited, ere he handled it, till the birds were at a long range from him, and that when he did use it he fired not at the body of the covey but at the two last birds. I could not fail detecting character even in this slight occurrence. We watched him for half a minute longer, when another keeper, accompanied by two sporting dogs, joined him, and the party, thus increased, turned into an avenue and disappeared from our sight. It may not be thought that I have rested too long on this event, for Mr. Petersham was eighty-four years of age.

We resumed our studies; but it was hard to do so. The white pony and the handsome old gentleman had rendered us all disinclined for the humdrumery of lessons. Moreover the guns, now heard popping off in two directly opposite quarters, kept us in a fever—routing us up just as we were again throwing heart into our prosaic occupations.

Langhton was in great excitement. Every one was talking about "the family" at the Abbey. "The family" had come by different routes from different points of the compass. Mr. Petersham, senior, had posted from town bringing his secretary with him as his sole companion. Lady Caroline Petersham with a party of ladies, in two carriages, had come from Dover. And as late as twelve o'clock on the preceding night, Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham and his intimate friend, Major Watchit, had passed through the town in a traveling carriage drawn by four horses. Not even in the days of the magnificent Sir Maraduke Clare had more posting been done, and more horses used, for so small a result. Every one was delighted. It was generally anticipated that there would be forthwith a series of festivities of unprecedented magnificence at the Abbey; but Mr. Gurley told me in confidence that such would not be the case. Mr. Petersham, senior, intended to return to town at the end of the week, after two or three days' shooting; and it was the intention of the other distinguished personages to live as much as possible in retirement.

The next Sunday showed that Mr. Gurley was right.

The first persons to enter the church for the morning's service were the members of the Abbey family. The Butterworth carriage blocked up the gateway of the church-yard as usual, and was surrounded by a larger assemblage than ordinary of spectators, who were in their hearts looking out for the string of equipages they expected to arrive from the Abbey. They were doomed to disappointment. Ety and I, with our boarders before us, passed through the gate, punctual to our customary time, but perhaps not without a wish that the Abbey "family" should arrive at the same moment with ourselves; and when we took our seats in the gallery and looked down into the body of the church, we found the Abbey pew already occupied by two ladies and

the same number of gentlemen. They had walked over the park, and entered the church, unobserved, by the small postern door.

It was easy to see which was Lady Caroline Petersham (for Mrs. Gurley whispered to me at the foot of the gallery stairs that Lady Caroline was in church). A tall, comely lady, still handsome, inclined to fat as a lady of her age and high rank might be allowed to be, richly but plainly dressed, and about ten or fifteen years younger than her husband, Mr. Petersham, senior.

Not less easy was it to distinguish the rest of the party; for I, like all the other Laughton people, was familiar with their names, and had heard their personal characteristics described over and over again.

The other lady was Miss Dent, Lady Caroline's companion, a plain and insignificant little person like myself. I made up my mind on the spot that I should like to know her.

Major Watchit was a very tall and attenuated man. Standing six feet and two inches, he looked even taller from being so very thin. His frame was wiry and vigorous, and could endure any amount of fatigue in any sort of climate; but all the same for that it struck at me at first—as a mere frame, and nothing more—as an absolute skeleton. He might be five-and-thirty years of age, but he was of just that appearance that I should not have been surprised to find him ten years older, or ten years younger. I could see where the muscles of his tawny visage ran into each other, so little was there besides bronzed skin to cover them. His dark hair was cropped close in a military fashion, and the black mustache on his upper lip was kept down by scissors, so that it did not stand out more than the hairs of his eyebrow. It glistened, however, and really was not much unlike a piece of court-plaster, cut into the shape of a mustache. His forehead was high and (though brown) of a lighter hue than the rest of his face. But his most remarkable features were his eyes. They were like bird's eyes—small, round, black, prominent, eager, restless, suspicious. Altogether, Major Watchit was a very singular personage in his appearance, and when I first saw him, although I was in church, I felt inclined to laugh—or at least to smile.

But the stranger in whom the congregation took most interest was Arthur Byfield Petersham, Esq. I will describe him, not only as he appeared while standing in the Abbey pew, but with a few touches derived from my subsequent knowledge. Standing in the pew, by the side of Major Watchit, Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham had the appearance of a mean and undersized man; but he was just five feet ten inches high, and was not ill-proportioned. Physically he was altogether inferior to his fine old father; for, besides having important disfigurements in a very freckled complexion, in an uneasy nervous action of the eyelids (which, when excited, he twitched close and open in a very uncomfortable manner), and in a malformation of the upper lip known as harelip, which surgical treatment had almost, but not quite, obliterated, he had not that frank and lofty expression which one likes to see in persons put in authority. Still he was not altogether without claims to personal attraction. He was a peculiar-looking man,

and to be that is something. His flaxen hair he wore long, not curling, but waving over the velvet collar of his blue coat, which was cut high in the neck, as was the fashion of the time. His eyes were large blue ones, neither expressive nor clear, but singularly prominent, seeming almost to look down out of their sockets upon the seat of his upper lip. His speech, too, was not in his favor; for his utterance, though it did not lack either decision or earnestness, had a slight impediment. Yet in spite of his drawbacks there was, or (which was the same to the Laughton observer) there seemed to be, a style about him which proclaimed him emphatically a member of the upper classes. His dress was always well chosen, and faultless in its finished simplicity; and he moved, notwithstanding an ungraceful whole-footed tread, with a dignity which is seldom found in men of inferior appearance.

I try to paint his portrait faithfully, and not to color it with the aversion which, when I came to know him thoroughly, I could not do otherwise than cherish for him.

It is needless to say that the eyes of the congregation were fixed on the Abbey pew more than on Mr. Butterworth and his curate throughout the service. I did my best to fix my attention on my devotions, but curiosity overpowered my will, and my eyes continually wandered to the "great people."

On leaving the church, after the dispersion of the congregation, we found at the church-yard gate a little pony-carriage, drawn by one Shetland pony, for the accommodation of Lady Caroline Petersham and Miss Dent; but the gentlemen, after handing the ladies into this modest vehicle, turned into the park on foot.

"Well, I like that, my dears," observed Mrs. Gurley, bustling up to us as we entered 'The Cottage' garden, "I like the absence of display in really grand people. It ought to be a lesson to the Butterworths; but, bless you, my dear, they won't profit by it."

If Mrs. Gurley ever displayed any asperity of temper it broke forth in her criticisms of the Butterworth grandeur.

"And you observed, my dear," continued the lady, detaining me, and letting Ety proceed with the children, "how Mr. Petersham and Major Watchit looked at Ety as she left the church?"

"Indeed, no. Surely they could not have been so impertinent," I answered, hotly. "You must be mistaken, Mrs. Gurley."

"Mistaken! Bless you, my dear, I'm never mistaken—never was mistaken in all my life, save when I thought you weren't as nice a girl as your sister. And that blunder only lasted during the first five minutes after Gurley introduced me to both of you. Take my word for it, both the gentlemen were very much struck with Ety."

"I trust not."

"Lor', my dear, don't say that; for perhaps you'll be invited to the Abbey, and if you don't care about that it'll be as good as a finishing education to Ety to see a little high society."

Mrs. Gurley said no more; but as I hastened through my toilet for dinner, and as I carved for the children, I recalled her words, and saw no reason why I should dislike them.

During the next ten days we saw nothing more of "the family" save a repetition of the

Sunday's entertainment already described, and two or three glimpses of Lady Caroline as her carriage drove through the town, and as many observations of the gentlemen as they walked or drove out to their shooting. The Butterworths of course made an early call at the Abbey, and Lady Caroline promptly returned their visit. We observed also the carriages of the leading aristocracy and gentry of the district rolling through the park to the Abbey, and we presumed that Lady Caroline's drives took her about the country to return these calls. But the news and gossip about the new-comers was by no means so exciting as had been anticipated.

On the eleventh day, however, as I was practicing up a piece of music on our new cottage-piano, which was the grand article of furniture in our little drawing-room, who should be shown into the apartment but Lady Caroline Petersham herself! I was alone at the time of her irruption, Etty being then on play-hours' duty in the school-room.

"Please, Miss, here's a lady," was the curt announcement of my maid, who, in spite of Mrs. Gurley's assiduous instructions, was only slowly mastering the elements of polite servitude.

Luckily, however, an awkwardness of that kind never put me out; and even if I had lost my countenance, Lady Caroline would soon have restored it. I found her a charming old lady.

"Ah, my dear Miss Tree," she said, commencing the conversation, and taking it for granted that I knew who she was, "I am very pleased to make your acquaintance. I didn't tell the girl my name, for I thought it might frighten her. It's such a sweet day that I am taking a long walk. There's nothing like walking for the health, and nothing like health for a good complexion. You young ladies should remember that. It doesn't matter what kind of complexion an old woman like me has."

I answered that I was a great walker, and found the park an admirable field for my favorite exercise.

"Well, I've fairly walked myself tired; so I thought I'd ask you to give me a rest and a glass of water before setting out again," continued the lady, falling back comfortably on my sofa, as if she had known me and it for years. "So you are practicing. That's right—for you are a teacher. Did you make that crayon sketch of sea-coast, my dear?"

I answered in the affirmative to this question, when I had rung for the water.

"And capitally done it is too," continued my visitor. "Why, my dear, you have a great deal of talent! You must be a positive acquisition to this little town. You played the organ beautifully last Sunday, and so did your sister the Sunday before. Are you not going to let me see her?"

"Tell Miss Annette that a lady is here who would like to see her," I said to the maid, who brought in the cold water and tumbler.

"Thank you, my dear, for waiting on me so prettily," the old lady next said, as she received the tumbler from my hand and took a hearty draught. "Cold water is one of my best friends—a much better friend it is, too, than many who profess to be warmer. And your sister is called Annette, is she? A very pretty name!"

"I always call her 'Etty.' Indeed she was always called 'Etty' till we came here."

"I like that better still, and if I like her, my dear, I'll call her Etty too. Once on a time every one called me 'Carry.' But now no one save my good old gray-headed husband would think of calling me 'Carry.' Ah! my dear, one of the saddest and surest signs that a woman is growing old is the gradual diminution of the number of people who call her by a short pet name!"

I had just time to explain that Etty was then in the school-room, amusing and superintending our pupils during play-hours, when the dear girl entered, slightly flushed with excitement, but not at all nervous, with her golden ringlets falling upon her high dress of black merino, and looking as lovely as I ever saw her in my life.

"I know a little about you," said the grand lady, when she had gone on chatting for a few minutes longer. "When I asked Miss Argentine Butterworth who lived in this pretty cottage, I learned from her that you were cousins of the Clares who still own the property here."

"Oh, Lady Caroline," I exclaimed quickly—Etty cordially supporting what I said by her looks—"you mayn't suppose us to be at all closely connected with such great people. Sir Marmaduke Clare was my grandfather's brother, but we have never known any thing of his descendants. They are our distant cousins, but Etty and I never saw them in all our lives, and never entered the Abbey save as members of the public, by paying the customary fee to the house-keeper."

Our visitor looked at me steadily, and paused for nearly a minute before she made reply in the following words—uttered with the full emphasis of deliberation, and an increased cordiality of tone—"My dear Miss Tree, you show singular good taste, and some courage, in telling me this so frankly. And I heartily like you for it. It is positively refreshing to find two young women in a little country town who're above pretension."

"But it's the simple fact, Lady Caroline," Etty and I both exclaimed together, blushing with surprise and pleasure.

"My pretty bird!" retorted the old lady, looking at Etty, "simple facts are just the facts which foolish people think it concerns their dignity to keep to themselves. Questionable facts, discreditable facts, they often make plenty of boasting of. I can't bear living with 'toadies,' which assuming people always are. Little people in the country are usually insufferable, because they are sycophants on one side and ambitious pretenders on the other, and all hollow as a drum in the middle. I see, my dears, we shall get on together. If you don't greatly object to the society of a humdrum old woman, you must come to the Abbey and see me."

Of course Etty and I said we should be delighted to accept her invitations.

Before our visitor went she had induced us to show her all over the house. She walked into the school-room, gossiping to the children and patting them on the head by turns. She climbed our narrow staircase, and declared herself immensely delighted with the children's little bedrooms, and their wee beds with white curtains trimmed with pink.

"My dears," she said, when the inspection

was completed, "I have a great deal of money, which of course, like all other rich people, I am very proud of, but I'd give you every penny of it if you would make me a little girl again and take me into your school. But I must be trotting home, for I have letters to write."

She shook hands heartily with me.

"I must have a kiss from you, my dear," she said to Etty, as if she were asking a favor.

The simplicity with which she bade us farewell in these different fashions tickled me immensely, and she saw my amusement in my eyes.

"Ah, my dear Miss Tibby," she said, with animation (for the first time using my short name, which she had caught up), "you see I'm no flatterer, after all. I prefer a *kiss* from Etty, but I think that I would rather have you for a *friend*."

When Mrs. Gurley called upon us at the close of the day, and was entertained with a recital of the events of the morning, I pleased her very much by saying that she and Lady Caroline Petersham strongly resembled each other in manner and style, though not in appearance. And this was indeed the case. Mrs. Gurley was only a wealthy farmer's daughter, and had never seen better society than that afforded her by the little country town in which we dwelt; and yet her manner put me in mind of Lady Caroline, the daughter of an earl, the wife of one of the wealthiest commoners of England, and a lady who had passed a long life in the highest and most refined circles of the aristocracy. The key to the mystery I found in the fact that Mrs. Gurley was constitutionally a very amiable and unselfish woman, whose chief happiness lay in creating enjoyment for others; while Lady Caroline Petersham (I don't pretend to speak positively about her qualities of temper) had grown old among people possessed of too much good taste to wear their worst characteristics on the outside, as persons of less refinement are apt to do. In youth and in her prime of life to please had been with her a favorite art, until in old age the art had become a habit. Since my residence in Laughton I have seen as much of the world as most quiet English women, who prefer domestic privacy to a more public and diversified life; and I have had occasion more than once to remark ladies of humble origin and imperfect culture, who were ambitious of achieving a distinguished style and passing for great people, and who, notwithstanding their considerable natural endowments and graces, failed to accomplish their object, simply because they could neither be nor seem to be forgetful of themselves and thoughtful for others. "Ah, my dear ladies," I have thought, "good Mrs. Gurley, the attorney's wife of Laughton, could have given you a lesson."

CHAPTER XI.

A GAME OF BOWLS.

THE Petershams were at Laughton for two months, during which time numerous parties of friends came and went, none of them appearing to stay for more than three or four days. Mr. Petersham, senior, did not renew his visit, but Lady Caroline remained at the head of her son's establishment throughout the entire two months;

which last fact rather surprised me, for she spoke as if she lived on the most affectionate terms with her husband. She was continually alluding to him as "her dear old man," and yet she was well content to be away from him for two months at a time. Use reconciles people to queer and uncomfortable arrangements; but I did not think that if I had had a husband who dearly loved me I should like to be so long away from him.

Altogether Etty and I paid seven distinct visits to Lady Caroline. Twice we went together, Mrs. Gurley kindly taking care of our boarders on the half-holidays, when we were at the Abbey; but on the other occasions we went separately, I on one day, Etty on another.

Lady Caroline Petersham certainly liked our society, for she would send or come for us in the middle of the day, take us home with her to lunch, and not let us return till ten o'clock at night. They never had visitors in the house when we came, and her ladyship frankly told me the reason why. "It doesn't at all follow, my dear," she said, "that because I like you the people who come to see me would do the same; and if they didn't, they'd be sure to resent your presence as a kind of affront. It's no use trying to force people of different ranks of life together. If they like each other, and choose to overstep the boundaries between them, by all means let them; but if I tried to thrust you on other people's prejudices, I should only be subjecting you to a risk of pain. So it'll be best for us to enjoy each other's society when we are by ourselves, and at full liberty to do as we please."

"St. Luke's little summer" was very fine that October, and lasted so long that day after day we had to express our astonishment at, and congratulate ourselves upon, the warmth and serenity of the weather. Five of our Abbey visits were made during its sunny brightness, and we were able to pass the time on those occasions, between lunch and dinner, out of doors. Mr. Petersham and Major Watchit paid us the compliment of returning from their shooting early, so that they might play bowls with us in the bowling-green. Those afternoons were there very pleasant. Lady Caroline occupied an easy chair and table, placed in a warm nook of the high box-tree wall (which London and Wise, the "heroic poets" of the topiary art, as Addison termed them in the *Spectator*, had arranged on a scale and fashion of "absurd magnificence"), and busied herself with her letters or fancy netting, while Etty and I and the two gentlemen played bowls. I was almost always on Major Watchit's side, and Etty with our opponent.

Major Watchit and I always won, not by luck, but by good play, for the major was a consummate master of games of all sorts. He was really a very singular and out-of-the-way person. In my eyes his exterior remained just as ludicrous as when I first saw him, and yet I could not do otherwise than recognize in him a vast amount of power. He was the most taciturn man I ever met in my life; I really am not exaggerating this peculiarity of his when I say that ten words exceeded the average sum of his utterances per hour when he was most animated by the presence of congenial companions. He stood straight up in his rigid lankiness, grace-

less as a lamp-post, but not quite so perpendicular; for the straight line of his sinewy body ran in such a manner that his cadaverous and tawny visage was about two inches in advance of his boots. He usually had a half-silly expression, a galyish leer on his mouth; and the pupils of his eyes always seemed as if they would drop out upon you, in which case you expected to find them nothing but beads of polished ebony. When he and Mr. Petersham used to toss for partners, and he had won me (I played better than Etty, otherwise the tossing would have had a different result), he only pointed to Mr. Petersham and Etty, thus saving his words, while he indicated that Etty and his friend were to oppose us. It was not till the moment for action came that it was manifest he had something in him. He and Mr. Petersham were both fond of athletic sports and games of chance; but at every trial of strength, fortune, or skill he was the winner. When they returned from shooting and reported their achievements, the major's score of heads of game bagged always greatly exceeded his friend's. We saw them play at "fives"—when directly the game began, the long, wiry limbs of the soldier leaped about with most surprising agility; and wherever the ball fell it rose into his hand, and was sent by a firm stroke flying against the wall like a shot. Mr. Petersham had only to look on for more than half the time, and, turning to us, say, "W-won-derful f-fellow! D-did y-you ever see such a fellow, Miss Tree?" stammering slightly at the beginning of his sentences, according to his wont. At billiards it was just the same. Mr. Petersham showed us a superb horse in his stables, which had just arrived from town in a van. It was so ferocious that neither he nor his men could even mount it. "What are you going to do with it here then, Mr. Petersham?" I asked. "Oh, Watchit is going to break him in," was the answer; and that Major Watchit should be unable to reduce the beast to submission was clearly, in Mr. Petersham's estimation, a contingency that did not require consideration.

After playing bowls for an hour and a half, on the occasion of our first visit to the Abbey, we desisted from the game, when Mr. Petersham said, "N-now, W-Watchit, h-how much do I owe you? Let's see, how many games have I lost?" The two gentlemen always played for money, in which respect, of course, Etty and I did not follow their example.

To save himself the labor of talking, the major took a slip of paper, on which he had kept the score, out of his pocket, and put it into his questioner's hand.

"T-then :-there's the money, Watchit," answered Mr. Petersham, looking at the result, marked on the paper, and giving his friend three sovereigns, which were received and pocketed without a word.

"W-what l-luck you have, man. I w-wish I had your luck. St-still, I don't complain."

"Which would you rather have, luck or money, Major Watchit?" inquired Lady Caroline, putting her netting away, and asking the question, as I fancied, in order that we might be amused by a further exhibition of the major's peculiarities.

Major Watchit answered by taking the money he had just won out of his waistcoat pocket, and

looking at it significantly, without uttering a word.

"Ay: but, my dear mute, how am I to interpret your dumb show?" said Lady Caroline. "Do you show the gold pieces to imply that you prefer 'money?' or that you prefer 'luck' which is able to win money?"

Major Watchit looked perplexed and troubled, as though he saw no way by which he could avoid using his tongue. At length he said, "Ask Petersham, he's a banker."

"H-he m-means," struck in Arthur Byfield Petersham, with a flush springing into his face, and a new animation appearing in his dull blue eyes, "that money and luck are so closely allied to each other, that it is difficult to discern sometimes where the one ends and the other begins. T-they ar-re doubly related to each other, as cause and effect, acting and reacting on each other, luck bringing money to the poor man, and money giving luck to the rich man, so that he can add more to what he has already. L-luck and m-money are the two greatest powers in the universe! They rule society, govern countries, shape the destiny of nations, and comprise every source of pleasure that makes life worth having. T-taken s-separately each is a divine power, but money is the greater. M-money i-is omnipotent—it is concentrated success: it is toil of brain and body, fear, hope, triumph, and every passion of the human mind; it is the true poetry of existence, reduced by a wonderful process (compared with which the dreams of alchemy are without a charm) to such a form that its possessor can enjoy their fruits and their sweetness without any counterbalancing sorrow. M-money is omnipotent, every thing bends before it. I-it r-raises the serf to be the companion of princes, presents old age with the love that youth pines for and is not permitted to reach—it even takes away the terrors of death. H-how m-many sinners on their death-beds have escaped the pangs of a stricken conscience, and made—at least believed they made—their peace with God by money! Oh give me money! It is the true nectar of the gods. But still it passes away without luck, and can not without luck be amassed in prodigious quantities. Give me them both, then—first the grand source of enjoyment, and then the powers which create and guard the means of enjoyment. Sages, and moralists, and priests may tell you what they will, but the possession of the greatest conceivable amount of good-fortune, united with the greatest conceivable amount of money, constitutes the grandest ideal of happiness which our limited mental capacities can entertain."

This extravagant speech was intended to be received as burlesque, and it was commenced in a tone of subdued mockery; but the vehemence of the speaker's feelings completely carried him from his original intention of concealing his true character under an assumption of irony. He held himself erect, with an expanded chest, and with something of a defiant look in his face, as, without pause or hesitation of any kind, he uttered the concluding words.

Etty and I were as astonished as Lady Caroline was amused at this outburst.

"What that man has said is as true as Gospel or Prophecy," observed Major Watchit deliberately, in a small, clear, and musical voice.

The words caused Etty and me a start and a smile, for they were so confidently and daintily uttered, and we had not before had such a flow of eloquence from their speaker.

"Nay, nay," said Lady Caroline, looking slyly at us, and proudly at "her *boy*," as she called Mr. Petersham, "he is neither evangelist nor prophet—he's only a banker's son."

After dinner (which I thoroughly enjoyed, because the courses and dishes, and ornaments of glass and plate, were for the most part as new to me as the mode of waiting adopted by the tall footmen) we spent an hour or two in the music-room. Both Mr. Petersham and the Major were accomplished musicians, understanding music as a science, and having a perfect artistic command of a variety of instruments. Etty and I soon found ourselves scarcely fit to accompany them in the most unpretending pieces; but they, with good-breeding and happy tact, discovered in a trice what we could do best, and encouraged us to do that.

"Watchit, you don't talk, but you can sing," observed Mr. Petersham, when we had gone through several instrumental pieces.

Having looked at us, and received an assurance that we should listen to him with pleasure, the taciturn soldier seated himself at a piano—looking, if such a thing be possible, rather more awkward than men usually look at that instrument, and sang two or three of Moore's Melodies with singular judgment and exquisite feeling. That done, he rose from the music-stool and stationed himself in a distant corner of the room, as dumb as an old clock that has not been wound up for years.

At ten o'clock we put on our cloaks and bonnets, and walked home in the moonlight, the two gentlemen accompanying us across the park to our garden-gate, and our maid walking a little in the rear.

"Etty," I said, as soon as we were alone, "they are very accomplished men. Even in London they must be *very* remarkable men. What is there that they can't do? They paint, they are musicians, they have traveled every where, they talk every language under the sun."

"Do they indeed?" retorted Etty, in her old, pert way. "For my part, I can't say much for their talking. Why Mr. Petersham can't speak a word without stammering, and the other man is little short of dumb."

"He sings beautifully," I said, feeling it my duty to defend Major Watchit from depreciation; "and for my part I like him quite as well as I do Mr. Petersham."

"As well?" answered Etty, throwing up her chin; "I should think so, indeed. Why if I had to marry one of them, I'd rather marry Major Watchit *ten* times than his friend *once*."

Somehow these words grated on my ears. What business had Etty to talk, even in jest, of marrying any man but Julian?

"Major Watchit is a man of action," continued Etty. "He does not talk with words, but deeds. I declare 'twas much better to observe him silently doing first one thing and then another—and doing every thing he attempted incomparably—than to listen to the priggish, self-satisfied stammering of that Mr. Petersham."

"Why, Etty!" I exclaimed, giving expression to my astonishment.

"Why, Tibby!" she returned, mocking me. "But what I tell you is the truth, and nothing either more or less. Have you ever dreamed or imagined or read in a novel of such purse-proud insolence? Money! Money! Money! The true nectar of the gods! And you could see he meant it. I declare to you, Tibby, the man roused my venom, and I felt as if I should like to teach him that there was something in this world more powerful than the money he is so proud of!"

"Money *is* very powerful, Etty. I think you are a little captious," I returned.

"True, money is powerful, but so are other things."

"What?"

"Beauty—for one."

"Tut, child, that *can't* last many years, but money *may* endure for ages."

"I was not talking of its permanence, but its power."

"Well, we won't argue about it; good-night, dear!" I said, lighting my candle.

For some reason not known to myself I didn't like Etty that night. She was in such a strange, wayward humor. I felt it would not be advisable either to pet her or to cosset her, so I kissed her coldly and went up stairs to bed.

CHAPTER XII.

WHY THE PETERSHAMS DID IT!

OUR first visit to Lady Caroline Petersham may be taken by the reader as a fair sample of our entertainments at the Abbey. Miss Dent I saw little of; and for the reason already stated, there were never any other visitors. The gentlemen, however, were always there, amusing us greatly, and offering us all those attentions which, as long as the world remains a world, will be always acceptable to women. They usually went to their shooting or returned from it by the way of our cottage, and scarcely a day passed that they did not offer us some delicate civility. They left us game and fruit in abundance, always taking care to state that Lady Caroline sent the presents. That lady also called on us continually, making herself almost as much at home in our cottage as if it belonged to her.

Mrs. Gurley was highly triumphant at the attentions paid us by "the family."

"Didn't I tell you so, my dear?" the kind woman said to me. "I was sure how it would be! Bless you, they may be great people, but such a beautiful creature as Etty doesn't cross their path every day!"

I had no objection to this explanation of the kindness of "the family," for I was as proud of my sister's beauty as I could have been of it had it been my own; and as to any danger to *her* from its being the object of admiration at the Abbey, the idea was simply ridiculous. We had told Lady Caroline all about Julian Gower, so that she and her son knew as well as I did that Etty was engaged. And even if she had been free to accept any new matrimonial overtures, the Abbey seemed about the last place in the world where she had any chance of receiving them. Mr. Petersham (we knew from Lady Caroline as well as from Mr. Gurley) was to

marry Miss Olive Blake in the course of the next few years; and as for Major Watchit—a man who never spoke more than ten words an hour in the presence of a lady could not be suspected of wishing to win her heart.

Moreover, the whole nature of our intercourse with “the family” was of a kind that forbade me to entertain the thought that Ety’s beauty was any reason why we should be cautious on the subject of Lady Caroline’s attentions. The whole case was such a simple one. She was a benevolent old lady, who having taken an interest in us, found an amiable pleasure in prattling with us about our concerns and in patronizing us. The course of a few weeks also showed that she desired to confer substantial benefit on us as well as amusement.

“My dear Miss Tibby,” the kind old lady said, shortly before her stay at Loughton terminated, “I’m going away next week; but I have directed the gardener to keep you well supplied with fruit and cut flowers, and also to set some of his men at work, from time to time, to keep your garden in order for you. And the game-keeper will leave you some game every week. Arthur wished me to settle these matters for him. He said, very justly, that such attentions would be more agreeable to you and your sister if you knew that the orders had been given to the servants by me. Young women must be very careful. And it would never do for us to set the Loughton busy-bodies saying that Arthur was paying too much attention to you and your sister.”

“Really, Lady Caroline,” I replied to this additional proof of kindness, “I don’t know which to admire the more—your goodness to us, or Mr. Petersham’s delicate thoughtfulness.”

“That’s right, my dear; I like your gratitude. It makes up for the want of it in others to whom I’ve tried to show kindness, and got only hard words for my pains. And surely we, who have so much of the good things of the world, ought to be considerate for others. By-the-by, my dear, Arthur wished me to say that, if it is quite convenient for you to receive him to-morrow, he would like to call on you as he goes out shooting, to talk over a little matter of business.”

“Indeed! Of course I shall be glad to see him,” I answered.

As Lady Caroline left without explaining what the “little matter of business” might be, Ety and I were in great excitement for the rest of the day. She had very much modified her first opinion of Mr. Arthur Petersham. Whatever faults he might have, and however false a view he might take of life from his high watch-tower of wealth, he had displayed so much true delicacy to us, that my sister could not do otherwise than pardon his arrogance, and think favorably of him.

The next morning at nine o’clock the chief of the Abbey keepers paused before our garden with a shooting pony, covered with bags for game; and whistling two beautiful sporting dogs to his feet, he waited while his master had an interview with me.

It was the first time that Mr. Petersham had ever been in our house, and I was pleased to observe that, although he was evidently quite at his ease, his manner was more deferential and

formal than usual. It seemed to imply that he esteemed it a privilege to be allowed to enter my drawing-room.

As soon as our first greetings were over he went straight to his “little matter of business.”

“A—although I—I have no daughters,” he said, “to put to school, Miss Tree, I have a little ward named Amy Reickart. Her father was a Danish merchant, who died a few years since, very far from rich, but still leaving a small property, as well as one child, behind him. Amy is really as sweet a little girl for seven years of age as you can imagine. The object of my visit is to learn if you can receive her among your pupils. My mother tells me you have still one vacancy for a boarder.”

“I can receive her, Mr. Petersham,” I answered, highly delighted, “and will do so gladly. It will do my school much good to have it known that your ward is with me.”

“T—that i—is a reason,” he answered, in his kindest manner, “for me to feel additional satisfaction in having found her so happy a home. I do not wish the child to be treated in any way differently from the rest of your party, but I want you to take the entire charge of her. Of course when I am down here she will pay us frequent visits, but I don’t want to be bothered in any way with paternal duties or paternal responsibilities. In short, I want you to take care of the poor little orphan just as if she were a sister of your own; to clothe her, teach her, and rear her without reference to me save in case of dangerous sickness. This will be a grave responsibility for you, and one you must be paid for in an exceptional manner. My mother tells me that your charge for an ordinary pupil is £35 per annum—a sum, I must say, that seems to me startlingly little for such advantages as you give your girls. Now will you take my ward off my hands for a payment of £200 per annum? I make this offer with reference to her fortune, as well as your services. Were she richer, I should suggest a larger sum.”

I need not say that this munificent (as it seemed to me) proposition was promptly accepted.

“I—I t—thank you,” my visitor then said, rising, with an air of relief. “Now that is off my mind. You must excuse me for entering into these matters of business. But as a business man and the child’s guardian I felt it right to do so.”

He then left my drawing-room.

The next time he had an interview with me there alone the business was of a different nature! At that second interview I stood before him—with suspicion, and horror, and shame warring within my breast! But I may not anticipate events. My story must be told as it was acted.

I attended Mr. Petersham to the garden porch on his way out, and admired his dogs, which were under the keeper’s care. While we were doing so Ety entered the garden with our little girls, on their return from a walk before morning lessons.

“I—I h—have taken the liberty to call on your sister, to say good-by to you and her,” he said, raising his hat. “I leave Loughton in a day or two, and shall not, in all probability, be at the Abbey till the partridges are ready for me next

year. Should I, however, in the mean time find that my engagements will permit me to alter my determination, the recollection of the pleasant weeks I have just spent will certainly bring me down sooner."

The manner in which this speech was made implied that the pleasure of the preceding weeks had, in a great measure, been derived from us. Etty saw the compliment, and replied to it by cordially shaking hands with our new patron, and expressing a hope that his absence from the Abbey would not be as long as he threatened.

Mr. Petersham left us, and I immediately communicated to Etty the nature of "his little matter of business."

"What a nice, kind man he is!" exclaimed Etty, enthusiastically. "I resolve, Tibby, from this time forth never to judge people uncharitably. How very considerably he managed the business! Every step taken in it by him has expressed his respect for us as *ladies*! He didn't come to us as if we were some mere ordinary country-town schoolmistresses, whose business it was to be accessible to any one who brought them a pupil; but first of all he asked Lady Caroline to ascertain if he might call upon us. That done, and permission being granted him to come, he makes his munificent proposition; not as if he were laying us under a heavy and eternal obligation to him, but as if he were receiving a favor from us. He arranges it all, too, with the fewest possible words and no fuss. An ordinary vulgar man would have told me all he had been doing, and would have exacted an expression of gratitude for his patronage; but he never even alluded to the subject, leaving you to communicate the good news to me. How nice it would be always to live with people who treat you in that style!"

I was amused at Etty's change of tone with regard to Mr. Petersham. But she was quite right. Mr. Petersham had behaved in the matter with the delicacy of a gentleman; and it would have been unworthy in Etty not to have highly appreciated such treatment, and been grateful for it. So I supported her opinions cordially.

That we were going to receive Mr. Petersham's ward into our school was a piece of intelligence which flew through the town like lightning. Immediately after morning school I tripped across the road to Mrs. Gurley, whose house almost adjoined the church-yard, and told her the astounding news. That amiable lady's congratulations were as hearty as her surprise was intense. She had never imagined such an explanation to the flattering attentions with which "the family" had loaded us. How foolish it had been in her to attribute them all to Etty's beauty! Of course she was a very lovely girl, but it was equally clear that Mr. Petersham and Lady Caroline did not want to buy her good looks for a chimney ornament. It was all so plain now that she could never all through her life forgive herself for not having seen through so simple a game. The case was just this: Lady Caroline and Mr. Petersham were looking out for an unexceptionable home for a little girl, a home in which she would be really well cared for in every respect, a home in which she would be secure of a happy childhood, and in which they could with easy consciences leave her, thus altogether

freeing themselves from an irksome responsibility. Such being the state of affairs, the lady and gentleman visit Laughton; and the lady, being first struck by the picturesque appearance of a cottage put in the corner of her son's park, inquires who may inhabit it. The answer (made by a consequential pea-hen of a woman who should be nameless) informs the lady that the cottage is occupied by two young ladies, the orphan daughters of an officer of the king's army, the grand-daughters of a much-respected beneficed clergyman, and the distant cousins of an old county family who still are the legal owners of Laughton Abbey, and that the said young ladies keep a school. Having learned thus much, the lady, good-natured no doubt, but still looking after her own interests, calls at the cottage to see what it is like inside—whether the young ladies are as superlative young ladies as is reported, whether the school-room is a cheerful one, whether the bedrooms are bright, and fresh, and airy. Liking what she sees at this first visit, the lady of rank calls again frequently, at all hours and seasons, popping suddenly into the school-room without rapping, and entering unannounced while dinner is on the table, to assure herself that every thing is as fair as it seems, that the table is a simple and wholesome and generous one, that there are no scholastic pains and penalties kept in the back-ground. The lady of rank then has the two schoolmistresses up to the Abbey, all unconscious of the real object of the politeness offered them, and induces them to talk, and play, and exhibit their accomplishments before two observant, scrutinizing, and polite men of the world. Well, the result of the inspection is, that the two young ladies are declared fit guardians and teachers for a young lady of fortune, and that the young lady of fortune is forthwith to be sent to them!

Mrs. Gurley had upbraided herself for want of sagacity and for dullness of vision. It was now my place to applaud her acuteness in seeing the design and harmonious entirety of a game, of which I, one of the chief players, had seen only the outward self-evident moves and the immediate result. Certainly Mrs. Gurley's interpretation was not agreeable to my self-love. I had flattered myself that Etty and I were invited to the Abbey, to afford acceptable recreation to our distinguished entertainers, not to undergo examination whether or no we were ladies. I had supposed Lady Caroline visited us because she liked us—not that she might ascertain whether we starved our pupils, or boxed their ears, when no one was looking at us. I confess Mrs. Gurley's version of our relations with the great people at the Abbey was a bitter draught to me; but I had no doubt that her shrewd common sense had led her to the truth.

I told Etty so when I had returned to the cottage and had repeated to her Mrs. Gurley's remarks; and I shall never forget the derision, and anger, and indignation with which the dear girl received my statement that my opinion concurred with that of our friend. "I never in all my life, Tibby, heard any thing so ridiculous, so insulting, so spiteful. I *did* think that Mrs. Gurley was incapable of such mean, petty spite as to put such uncomfortable, and degrading, and irritating notions into your head. It's enough to make me say I'll never again believe

in human goodness. I had thought Mrs. Gurley the quintessence of benevolence, incapable of saying an uncharitable thing, and, what's more, I had thought her a very sensible woman, but now I find her as foolish and malevolent as the rest of the world. Just because *she* hasn't been asked to the Abbey, and *we've* been made a great deal of by Lady Caroline Petersham, she turns upon us, and says all kinds of contemptuous things of us; and my own sister (and there's the sting—and I shall never, *never* forget it) turns traitor to the cause, abandons me in the hour of trial—and—oh, Tibby! I had thought better of you!"

The fact is, Etty (usually the sweetest-tempered girl imaginable) went into an impetuous sort of storm that very closely resembled "a passion." But she did look so proudly beautiful—her pink lips curved, and her delicate complexion brightened up, and her lithe figure rose, and her chest heaved and dropped, and her violet eyes flashed, and she threw back her long neck, and shook her golden curls at me in such a manner that, though I thought her very foolish to make such a fuss about nothing, I thoroughly enjoyed looking at her. Still I could not let her speak in that way of our best friend, Mrs. Gurley. I reminded her of all the kindness Mrs. Gurley had shown us and all the care she had taken of us, and I told her that it was flagrant ingratitude to use such language under emotions of resentment toward one who had such strong claims on our love. In short, I gave her a downright good scolding, such as she had never before received from me. And, to my great delight, my spirited conduct brought her into a very different frame of mind; for she had a good fit of crying, and then made a cordial recantation of all the worst of her charges against Mrs. Gurley. "Well, Tibby," she said, "I own I was in the wrong to talk in that way about Mrs. Gurley. I know she is quite as amiable and benevolent as you say, and I am sure she wouldn't, if she knew it, hurt our feelings or those of any one else. But it is so scaldingly indignation-raising, Tibby, to be told that we are not ladies, and not fit companions for those banker-people who have hired the house that belongs to our cousins, and that we are nothing better than the veriest and most tumble-down cheese-mongers."

At this I smiled, and suggested that Mrs. Gurley had never hinted that in the opinion of Lady Caroline Petersham we were "tumble-down cheese-mongers," but two ladies "keeping a school for little girls."

"Well, well, Tibby!" she answered, "I admit all that, and I have retracted all the unkind things I have said of Mrs. Gurley. Only, as to the main point, the reason why Lady Caroline Petersham liked us and showed us attention, she is altogether wrong. She has simply fallen into an egregious blunder, and dragged you along with her; and of course I can never have the same high esteem for Mrs. Gurley's judgment as I had before. That is not to be expected."

The dear girl uttered these last words with such a magnificent emphasis that I almost burst out laughing; and indeed I should have done so had not a fear of rousing her again, just as she was calming down so nicely, restrained me.

In the evening, when Mr. Gurley called upon us to offer his congratulations on our good luck,

Etty was entirely herself again—having quite left her transient ill-temper behind her, and being quite in the humor to look on the *substantial good* of Mr. Petersham's "little matter of business," without troubling herself about the purely sentimental considerations attached to it.

To tell the truth, our new acquisition had already removed a heavy anxiety from my mind. It was true that our school had succeeded; but the success of such a school in a little country town was so slender a piece of good fortune that I could not lean on it with confidence. Our terms were necessarily very low, for our pupils were only the children of "country-town gentlefolk;" and I had already had experience enough in my business to see that, however economical I might be, I could not, even with my school always full, hope to lay by more than £30 per annum. The only margin I could make out on paper between the limits of our greatest possible income and its least possible attendant expenses was £40 or £45 a year, and my experience as housekeeper at Farnham Cobb had taught me that a surplus hoped for is always materially less than the surplus attained under the most favorable circumstances. Mine is by no means a gloomy or despondent temperament; but the reverse of fortune I had recently sustained had taught me to look beyond the sunshine around me to the probability of a cloud or a storm rising up in the distance and coming upon us. In short, I had an uncomfortable incredulity in the permanence of that enviable degree of worldly prosperity which Etty and I had achieved. Some of our pupils might leave us before we had others to replace them. Scarletina might break up our school, and deprive us of our income for a quarter of a year. Other expenses might come upon us. In case of a series of misfortunes absorbing my small fund of reserved money, what should we do? I knew Mr. Gurley and Mr. Choate would be ready to assist us. But I could not endure the thought of taking money help from them. Etty's elastic spirits happily secured her from a single gloomy anticipation; and of course I was careful not to cloud her cheerfulness by imposing upon her a participation in my business anxiety. She was so young and ardent, I could not think of depressing her with my fears about money matters. And now I found all cause for anxiety removed from my mind!

"My dear young ladies," said our business friend, "you must raise your terms immediately."

"That I should not like to do, Mr. Gurley," I answered. "It wouldn't be fair to the parents of our old pupils."

"Of course you mayn't alter your terms to old pupils; but you are perfectly at liberty to say how much more you mean to have for your new ones. Clap £15 a year on your charge for boarders, and £10 a year for day-boarders. For day-pupils, who don't dine with you, you need make no alteration. Don't lose any time. I'll have a new prospectus for you printed immediately. As soon as it gets known (and that won't be many days) that Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham has placed his ward with you, you'll have a new and higher class of people wishing to send you their children. Make them pay, my dears—there's nothing like it for making people re-

spect you. That's what I always say to myself, Miss Tree, when I draw out a bill of charges—"The more you pay me for my law, the better opinion you'll have of its quality." That's what I say to myself when I'm nervous about the size of a 'sum total.' Whatever you charge, my dears, those who pay you won't come to you because they love you, but because they want what you sell. Take my advice. I am a business man. Lord, my dears, do you only work away quietly here for a few years, and by the time Julian Gower is ready to marry Miss Ety she'll have a little fortune of her own. How say you, Miss Ety? wouldn't you rather enter your husband's house, for the first time, with £500 of your own than go to him empty handed?"

"Mr. Gurley," I said, "poetry and business are blended in you as surely they never were in any man before!"

"Lor, my dear Miss Tree!" he answered, with a laugh, evidently much pleased with my complimentary speech, "*business*, looked at from a right point of view, is the grandest *poetry*; and *poetry*, looked at from any point of view, is sometimes the *poorest*, *sorriest business* that can be imagined."

All my scruples fell before Mr. Gurley's suggestion that, in endeavoring to earn more money and save more money, I should be making a purse against Ety's wedding-day, for her to give to Julian Gower. Five hundred pounds! Why with raised terms and Mr. Petersham's ward for a pupil we might lay by £200 a year. By the end of five years, when Julian and Ety would marry, we should have £1000 at least. And Ety should have the whole of it to take to Julian Gower! And when she was married I would continue to live in my quiet cottage, still keeping school, and earning fortunes for Julian Gower's children! This was my life-plan taken on the instant, and adhered to for almost a year.

So Mr. Gurley left us, with authority to get our new business prospectuses.

His judgment was not at fault. A week did not elapse before three or four leading persons, of the minor landed gentry of the district, had arranged to send us their children. Mrs. Singleton Poppet, of Farley House, would let us have her three little girls as day-pupils. Farley House was only four miles distant, and the children would be conveyed to and fro every day in the Farley House carriage. In like manner Mrs. Mirth, of Brierley Paddock, arranged to send us a carriage-load of her children every day.

"Miss Argentine Butterworth mentioned to me," observed Mrs. Mirth, "that she had been the means of introducing you to Lady Caroline Petersham, and subsequently of securing to you for a pupil Mr. Petersham's ward. I was not at all surprised to hear it. Argentine Butterworth is a noble creature. That sweet girl literally overflows with amiability. She beams with it, Miss Tree. I assure you, sheer unadulterated beneficence sometimes makes Argentine Butterworth absolutely phosphorescent."

Mrs. Mirth, of Brierley Paddock, spoke in a voice and style evidently copied from the object of her admiration.

"What insufferable impertinence!" exclaimed Ety, as soon as Mrs. Mirth had taken her leave.

"What insufferable impertinence it is for *that* Miss Argentine Butterworth to assume and proclaim that she is our benefactress!"

For me, I was in no humor to scold about a trifle which thoroughly amused me. "Why what does it matter, Ety?" I said. "Look how pleasantly the sun is shining in the garden! Let's go out and enjoy it. Miss Argentine Butterworth may say that she introduced us to the sun, if she likes."

"That's right, Tibby. That's how I ought to feel, but I don't. I can't endure these *little* genteel people. I should like just for nine months or a year to be put at the head of society in this neighborhood, over the Mrs. Poppets and Mrs. Mirths of the district, with their Farley Houses and their Brierley Paddocks! *Wouldn't I rule them with a rod of iron!*" The playful affectation of vengeance with which she said this made me receive it only as a jest; but had I then known that which subsequently came to my knowledge I should have seen a terrible earnestness lurking under her merry humor.

Mr. Gurley was of course well pleased that his advice had been followed, and yet more pleased that our interests had been so manifestly advanced by its adoption. "Mr. Petersham," the shrewd solicitor remarked to us, shortly after Amy Reickart and our other hyper-genteel pupils had come to us, "Mr. Petersham is a clever man and understands the world. He is sure of being returned our member if he should like to stand for Laughton next election. By simply putting his ward in the best possible home he could find for her, and paying liberally for it, he has made himself more popular in the town than he could have made himself by giving us townspeople a series of dinner-parties. The townspeople take the little girl's presence here as a compliment to themselves, and an earnest of future favors from the wealthy banker. Of course I don't go so far as to say that Mr. Petersham in taking so wise a step was actuated by motives of policy. But this I know—the step has secured him a seat in Parliament (if he wishes for it), which before now has cost a successful candidate several thousands of pounds."

"Pooh!" said Ety, tossing up her head, as soon as Mr. Gurley had left us. "How silly every one is to be inventing every irrational and utterly impossible reason for Mr. Petersham's natural conduct in putting his ward with us! Mr. Gurley has caught the mad fever of his wife, and now he'll run about the country biting every one who comes in his way!"

Mr. Gurley's remarks appeared to me very sensible; but past experiences warned me not to say so. My object was to smooth down difficulties with Ety, who had for several days past been strangely irritable and fanciful. But that was not to be wondered at: for how should she be otherwise than unsettled, with Julian so far away—for so many years?

"Well, Ety," I said, cheerfully, "never mind Mr. Petersham's motives, and don't trouble your head about *every one's* gossip. I advise you to set to work and write word to Julian that when he returns to England he'll find us quite rich women."

CHAPTER XIII.

SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS.

"If a person of an humble position with only ordinary strength of character wishes to lead in the country a simple, upright, honest life, don't let him fix his dwelling near the gate of a great man's park." This is one of Julian Gower's maxims, and my individual experience makes me most cordially echo it.

I enjoy rural life as thoroughly as it is possible for any human creature to do, preferring it far before the excitement and greater intellectual activity of cities; but I would sooner embrace a lot, dooming me to a perpetual imprisonment amidst the bricks and mortar and noisy contention of London, unbroken by even an occasional visit to suburban haunts, than one which should require me with limited means to abide for nine months of each year in a country cottage within sight of a great man's park-lodge. And I am not led to this opinion simply by an observation of my own character, though that alone would be a sufficient justification for my embracing it. In my time I have lived much and intimately with a variety of families of my own rank in the country—with farmers and yeomen, country doctors and country lawyers, country clergymen and country merchants—and I have invariably found their lives more or less healthy and dignified, just in proportion as they are more or less remote from the palaces of the aristocracy. This sentiment will seem fantastic to some of my readers, and contemptible to many more; yet it is a deliberate expression of a view which I am ready to maintain by an abundance of illustration. Rank and wealth are prone everywhere to obtain too powerful an influence over ordinary minds; and in the country their sway amounts to downright despotism over the moral nature of those who either are destitute of them or possess them in only a limited degree. In cities, where they are abundant and are surrounded by other sources of interest, I do not think about them. In the country I always find I have to strive against their tyranny; and however steadily I strive against them, I find invariably that in a long struggle they get a certain limited mastery over me. The carriage from the Hall passes as I am taking a contemplative stroll in the lanes; I see the ladies in their rich dresses, wearing their proud, languid looks as they lay down their books on the seat before them, or exchange words with the gentlemen who attend them. The carriage turns into my lord's avenue, and as it disappears from my sight I am wondering who they are, whether they are happy, what careers of splendid ambition are before them, instead of searching the wayside bank for flowers, or keeping a bright look-out for a landscape to paint, or recalling the last poem read, or pondering on good resolves for future action. Nature, art, high thought, have all been sent flying by the high-stepping horses and the liveries passing under the elms of his lordship's park. In short, if I were to say truly what has been the hardest struggle of my moral life, I should say—*not to be a snob*. Men, with their superior strength and greater variety of pursuits, do not experience this difficulty so frequently, or in so great a degree, as women; and yet I took

for my text to this homely the words of the firmest, bravest man of action I have ever known.

I am sure that if we had not lived at Laughton, with that grand house, and park, and lake continually before us, I should have been a better woman, and Etty a happier.

We did not settle well to our work after the departure of "the family." Lady Caroline Petersham, and Mr. Petersham, and Major Watchit, though we knew so little of them, had more of our thoughts than our friends in Laughton, who had received us with cordial welcome when we most needed it. The mere flies that buzzed about the warmth and brightness of the Petersham prosperity became to us as birds of paradise. I liked to have Miss Argentine Butterworth, and Mrs. Poppet, and Mrs. Mirth call upon us, and I listened to them with gradually increasing interest as they instructed me on the pedigree, and dignity, and wealth of the surrounding county families. Amy Reickart was a charming child; but as the ward of the mighty Mr. Petersham she had fascinations for us which she would not have otherwise possessed. I blush to reflect on all this miserable pettiness, and I only narrate it thus minutely because it is right for me to do so.

Was I not justified in saying that the difference between life at Farnham Cobb and life at Laughton was very great? It was hard to believe that only twelve miles of rutted lanes lay between us and our old home. We soon left off talking of Farnham Cobb. The little news that came to us from that parish was not altogether of a kind to please us. Mr. Ardent's innovations were reported to us with exaggerations; and I heard with no sincere feelings of pleasure that Mr. Michael Clawline had become the tenant of Sandhill, and was beginning to be looked upon as a farmer of some importance. I like to hear of men rising in the world by the exercise of honest industry and sagacity; but as to Mr. Clawline's industry, he never condescended, even in harvest-time, "to strip taw his work;" and as to his sagacity, I could not see how mere intelligence in the operations of husbandry, aided by thrift, could have raised a man in the course of twenty-five years from a farm-servant to an occupier of a considerable farm. It was unreasonable in me to be annoyed at it. I knew that "business" was a game, in which the stakes steadily and imperceptibly passed out of the hands of such men as the Rev. Solomon Easy into the canvas bags of the Michael Clawlines. My chagrin, therefore, was out of place when it took the form of irritation against a rule of life as ancient as

That good old plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

Had my dear grandfather lived to know want the case would have been different—affection for him would then have justified my indignation.

I frankly told Mr. Gurley my feelings on this subject; but instead of sympathizing with me, he replied with incomparable *sang froid*, "Oh that's nothing to be annoyed at! Business is business. Of course Michael Clawline robbed your grandfather—in the way of business. Everybody, all the country through, robbed your grandfather—in the way of business. He was a safe annuity to all the sharp dealers and jobbers.

within twelve miles of him. In my time I took a great deal of money out of his pocket. Of course I never robbed him—the members of my profession never do that kind of thing—but I squeezed him firmly. Surely I was right in doing so. His money is much safer and more usefully employed in my hands than it would be in Clawline's."

In the Christmas holidays (and also on the following Mid-summer vacation) there was an outbreak of gayety in Laughton. The townspeople entertained each other at dinner and quadrille parties, and there were two or three grand receptions of a festive kind at the Rectory. About half a dozen or a dozen young men—students at the hospitals in London or the Inns of Court, articulated clerks to metropolitan solicitors, undergraduates of Oxford or Cambridge, and one or two young barristers—visited the town and neighborhood, traveling down from London on the roofs of the coaches which dashed past our gate several times a day. These young men brought with them a transient effervescence of hilarity that was an agreeable change to the usual monotony of the neighborhood. Their conversation and general tone conveyed an impression that the pursuit of gayety was the one business of their lives. By day they went out shooting, or skated on the Abbey water, or played billiards in the billiard-room of the Blue Boar, or, mounting their fathers' hacks, rode up and down the High Street, and along the turnpike-road, in the most fidgety and clattering fashion imaginable. At night they appeared at "the party" of the evening, dancing wildly through quadrilles or whirling madly in waltzes, abounding in laughter and jokes, drinking wine with reckless freedom at supper, and finishing up by putting cigars in their mouths and attending their fair partners to their houses, at the doors of which they parted with them, in the silly sentimental style which young men of that day affected.

Etty and I were asked to these parties, and, in obedience to Mrs. Gurley's counsel, attended them. Our grandfather had been so recently dead that we would rather have declined the invitations to the Christmas revels; but on Mrs. Gurley assuring us that to do so would render us liable to misconstruction, we took part in the rejoicing, and had from the milliner, already mentioned, some white muslin dresses trimmed with mourning ribbons. I was glad that we did so, for Etty enjoyed the parties very much. Her dancing (acquired from the professor who came to the cottage to teach our children) was declared to be very graceful, and her beauty made her the belle of the town. Indeed she created a "sensation;" and although we had taken precautions that her engagement to Julian Gower should be known, she had to refuse an offer before the holidays were over, besides being pestered by the attentions of Captain Mervin Butterworth, of the Royal Artillery. Of course, while Laughton was rejoicing I was a person of comparative insignificance. I went every where, and was hospitably received wherever I went; but it was seldom that I was asked to dance; and as I always declined the few proffers that were made me, it came to be understood that my office was to do duty as *chaperon* to my pretty sister, and play quadrilles and waltzes when there was no hired pianist present.

I had not before had a really good opportunity of studying Laughton society. Hitherto we had known the people only at a distance as strangers, or mere acquaintances to bow to in the streets. Those who had pupils to send us were comparatively few; and it was only with those few that we had, up to the Christmas holidays, held personal intercourse. On the whole, a close examination did not tend to raise the people in my estimation. They were so divided by class rivalries and political prejudices. "The family," and "the family before the Petershams," and "the family before the family that came before the Petershams," were everlastingly being dragged into conversation. All the temporary residents at the Abbey previous to the Petershams had, for electioneering purposes, maintained visiting relations with the leading townspeople; and we were constantly hearing such sentences as, "When I dined with Sir Arthur Marrytage at the Abbey," and, "When Lord and Lady Bellhaven did us the honor of dining at our table." Every peer, or baronet, or government placeman, who had staid in the parish during any day of the previous twenty years was mentioned in terms of friendship by persons who had only shaken hands with them before an election contest. This folly was only aggravated by the pugnacious opposition of the few persons who, either from genuine, but embittered, right feeling, or from private pique, did battle with it. The modes in which the war of *Simplicity versus Assumption* was carried on were sometimes very grotesque. One gentleman, a retired naval officer, had been guilty of the bad taste of decorating his plate with arms to which he had no right. As a protest against this absurdity, Mr. Prince, an opulent merchant, known to be a member of an old gentle family of the district, had the arms erased from all his household goods which had for generations been ornamented with them. His conduct was the cause of a hot quarrel; but he persisted in directing the attention of his guests to the blemished spoons and tankards from which he had scratched his armorial bearings. Mr. Prince was intensely proud of his virtue in this particular. But I could not see much to admire in it; and I thought his pride was just as false as that which he so extravagantly despised in his opponent.

"Oh, Etty," I said, as the holidays came to a close with a dance at Mr. Prince's house, "what a number of sweet flowers never come to their perfection in that little town, and all through the cold shade flung upon them by the trees of this magnificent park!"

"Rubbish, Tibby!" was my sister's answer. "Rather say what a number of graces you find in the rustic inhabitants of that little town, simply because they get occasional lessons in a high school of manners!"

It is a small matter to remark upon, and yet it is worthy of observation that Etty and I always spoke of the town of Laughton (though it was not a quarter of a mile away from our cottage) as if we didn't belong to it. Its inhabitants were to us "the townspeople." We were residents in the park.

CHAPTER XIV.

JULIAN'S BAD NEWS.

I HAVE said enough to show that our life in "The Cottage," happy and prosperous as it appeared to outside observers, contained within it the seeds of disquiet and moral deterioration. I am of a hardy nature, and the position of trust in which I was as a child placed by the early death of my mother had given me an armor suitable for a contest with moral adversaries. It was, however, otherwise with dear Etty. At Farnham Cobb she had, to the last days of my grandfather's life, been the child, the pet, the plaything; and now she felt need of the strength which different circumstances had given me.

I watched her with lively anxiety. There was reason for my doing so. The laughing, gleesome child of Farnham Cobb, the child whose buoyant spirits had been perpetual music and sunshine in the old College, began to suffer from attacks of dejection. Not seldom I found her with tears in her eyes. She would make her appearance at our breakfast-table with a clouded brow; and (greatest change of all) she betrayed frequent signs of petulance and irritability. To the children, however, she was invariably patient and loving. They hung upon her, playing with her golden curls and kissing her pretty face. They wrote home, also, simple accounts of her goodness and sweetness. Little Amy Reickart's notes to her guardian, penned in magnified round hand, were full of the praises of "dear Miss Etty." At the outset we established the rule that, for the sake of her dignity, my sister should be addressed by our children as "Miss Annette;" but the law soon became obsolete, and "Miss Annette" was converted into "dear Miss Etty."

"You see," I said to her one day, with a laugh, "you are the bright fairy, and I am the dark ogress of this castle."

I should have been blind had I not seen that Etty was unhappy. I could not press her for the secret of her sorrow; for to pry into the sadness of another's heart has always seemed to me as cruel as to refuse sympathy to those who invite it. My part was to watch her tenderly, and be careful that no coldness or apparent indifference to her happiness on my part prevented her from speaking to me when she might wish to pour her trouble into the ear of a friend. From my inmost heart I pitied her. The right arm to support her, the lips that alone could comfort her, the only heart that could fully and accurately study hers, was so far away.

At first Julian's letters won back the lost freshness to her face and spirits. Once a month the mail brought a packet from South America, and surely as it arrived Etty was again for a few days the light-hearted girl of old times; at least the letters had that good effect upon her for several months. The hopefulness, and courage, and hearty manliness of Julian's writing braced her nerves, driving away for a time all the petty foolish imaginations which crept alike into her mind and mine. Of course he was minutely informed of all our proceedings. In his village at the foot of a ridge of the Andes he was familiar with our life at Laughton—the size of our house and rooms, the characters of our pupils, the nature of our friendships, the hours we kept, the walks

we took. At the close of January we had a letter from him containing a graphic account of what appeared to us a more singular coincidence than any to be found in the records of domestic romance. In Northumberland, just before resigning his post of under-viewer to the Shorton Colliery, he had seen Miss Olive Blake, the heiress of the firm of "Petersham and Blake"—the lady who was in due time to be the bride of Mr. Arthur Petersham. He had not only seen her, but had walked with her over a Northumbrian moor, and talked with her freely and in confidence. What was more, he had talked to her about no less a person than Etty Tree of Farnham Cobb; and it was in consequence of her advice that he had declared his love to Etty, young as she then was, and long as the period promised to be ere he could make her his wife. Here was a coincidence! How Etty blushed, and how her eyes dimmed with innocent, mischievous happiness as she read the whole account of the meeting! The surprise and the gladness were the best of medicines for her. She went about singing for a whole week.

But then she flagged again.

Spring came, and with it the anniversary of our dear grandfather's death. Etty and I laid aside our mourning, and, like the beds in the warm nooks of our garden, put on bright, cheerful colors; but the change of costume did more to remind us sorrowfully of the good old man than ever our black weeds had done. Indeed I had a fortnight of real low spirits; and ere they had left me Mr. Petersham wrote to me, announcing his mother's death, and requesting that Amy Reickart, as one of her distant relations, should be put into mourning. It was the first time that we had heard of any relationship existing between Amy and our guardian.

Kind words make their speaker loved. We had received from Lady Caroline both kind words and kind deeds; and I question whether amidst all the crowd who swelled her funeral pomp there were six persons who regretted the amiable old lady more than Etty and myself. If we had been a little foolish, first in feeling pride at her notice, and then in being sensitive as to its cause, we felt reproved. Whatever else might happen to us, she would never again tickle our vanity or touch our self-love.

Soon we had a graver cause for trouble. Julian wrote us that he had not before told us the difficulties by which he was surrounded. He had not wished to depress us with melancholy intelligence, and he had refrained from telling us all the trials with which he had to contend, until he had satisfied himself either that they were insuperable or would succumb to energetic treatment. The substance of the following explanation was, that he had been at length convinced that the mines, of which he was superintendent, could never be worked to advantage, and that, as he was bound to serve the company to whom they belonged for something more than four years longer, he had the cheerless prospect of returning to England at the expiration of his term almost as poor as he left it. Thus much he told us. He did not add (that which long years afterward I found out was the case) that, at the time of penning the letter which so afflicted us, he was suffering extreme debility from an attack of fever—was surrounded by mutinous

workmen—and was in hourly peril of a violent death. He only told us that which might affect our private calculations for the future. He caused us no pain save that which was necessary for us to endure if we were to be secured from a more cruel disappointment a few years hence. His bright visions of wealth speedily acquired had turned out empty dreams. It would have been barbarous mercy to have kept us in ignorance of the fact. If he were silent, we might reasonably suppose that a portion of his "great expectations" had been realized, and we might build up castles of hope the overthrow of which would bury us beneath their ruins.

There was one source of consolation in the letter. Its tone was hopeful, manly, self-reliant, undaunted. It was a hero's letter. Clouded by misfortune, Julian Gower stood erect. No adversary should subdue him.

"Darling Ety," I said, watching my sister's pale face, "have we not reason now to be thankful for the success of our school? Julian may return to England poor, but he will have faithfully discharged the arduous duties placed on him by his employers, and his wife will have a fortune of £1000 to present him with."

She pulled her golden hair off her face with both hands and let it fall back on her shoulders. Then looking at me, in a tone that cut me to my inmost heart, she said, "God bless you, Tibby! may God reward you for your care of me as you deserve! I wish I were as good a woman as you are!"

Having made this speech, which in a certain way was to me inexplicable, she took up the leaves of Julian's letter and quitted the room, leaving me to ponder on her strange words and stranger manner. What could have been in the dear child's mind to make her address me so earnestly? why should she esteem me so much better than herself?

CHAPTER XV.

ETTY'S QUESTION.

JUST before the arrival of Julian's dispiriting letter, I and Ety had actually entertained the thought of visiting London. Indeed we had almost determined to do so. I had never been in the capital of Great Britain, and Ety had never seen a larger town than that which was overshadowed by the Abbey woods. Several ladies in Laughton resembled myself in never having seen London, and not a few Laughton girls of Ety's age were in the same degree with her ignorant of the delights and discomforts of traveling. The cathedral town, forty miles distant, whither once in three years a musical festival, with all the best London artists for performers, attracted all the wealthier inhabitants of the surrounding provinces, was the metropolis with which the Laughton "ladies of the world" boasted a familiar acquaintance.

With a desire, natural to our years, of seeing the world beyond the confines of our own narrow home, and with a not reprehensible ambition to be somewhat in advance of our more backward neighbors, I and my sister had meditated a visit to London. The trip, I felt, would do me good; and Ety's health required change of

scene. Of course we gained a kind of moral countenance to our project by arguing that the experience and prestige we should gain by the excursion would better qualify us to be efficient instructors of the young, and would confer distinction on our school. Of course we took Mr. and Mrs. Gurley into our confidence, and they both warmly encouraged us to carry out our daring proposition. Mrs. Gurley had a cousin, married to a tradesman in Oxford Street, who would be happy either to take us into her house as lodgers (if she had the requisite accommodation), or to find us a respectable domicile, if an increasing family rendered her unable to receive us under her own roof. Mr. Gurley could tell all about the perils of the road, and the mysteries of the town; what places to visit, what coach fares to pay, what extortions to avoid. He and Mrs. Gurley knew more of London than any other people of their age in Laughton; for they had spent the honey-moon, twenty years before, at the Bull and Mouth, near the far-famed Blue Coat School, and they had sojourned in it three separate times since.

We and our kind friends met together several evenings in succession, after our children were in bed, and discussed the details of our scheme. Mr. Gurley with a map of London, and a hand-book of London, and a whole sheaf of antique play-bills on the table before him. Nothing could be more hearty than the interest he manifested in our contemplated movements. First he took us up the road, giving us, by the help of a topographical dictionary, a vivid and accurate view of the various towns through which we should pass, particularly impressing upon us that when the coach stopped to breakfast and dine we were not to wait for ceremony, but seize hold of whatever lay before us, only taking care to avoid very hot dishes. For he explained to us that the landlords of the Winchat Arms and the Burfield Roaster were in the habit of delaying the dinner till the coach was on the very point of starting again, and then would seduce the unwary into taking basins of scalding soup and vitriolic Irish stews which no mortal mouth could consume till they had cooled down. Then Mr. Gurley drew out, for our guidance and preservation in the city of the world, three separate lists of memoranda, headed respectively "things to be seen," "things to be avoided," "things to be borne in mind." In addition to this, Mr. Gurley presented us with a manual containing lists of the distances between a great number of different places within the walls of London, and added to it a bulky abstract, in his own handwriting, of the laws relating to hackney-coaches. And finally, that I might not commence my perilous expedition without all possible foreknowledge of what I should encounter, Mr. Gurley lent me for a private perusal an old copy of "Tom and Bob in London."

I need not say that Julian's discouraging intelligence put an end to this fascinating project. We had a better use for thirty pounds than the expense of a trip to London. So we returned "Tom and Bob," and the "Mannual of Hackney-Coach Fares," and the manuscript abstract of the laws relating to hackney-coaches to Mr. Gurley, with the intimation that we had relinquished our intention. At first he was astonished; but when we frankly told him the reason, he approved

our conduct emphatically. "Quite right, young ladies!" he said. "Enjoyment is a good thing, but it may cost too much."

We remained in Laughton, therefore, during the Mid-summer holidays, taking part in the second outbreak of festivity, already mentioned. The horticultural show, and cricket matches, and numerous picnics, were the principal features of the gayety; but we did not enjoy them so much as we had enjoyed the Christmas dances. I was very sad in my secret heart, and it was generally remarked how pale and ill Etty looked. To me, however, it appeared that she was stronger in bodily health, though subject to depression of spirits. One bad sign in her could not escape my observation. I noticed that she no longer counted the days impatiently till the arrival of the mail which brought Julian's letters. I remarked that when we were in Mr. Gurley's house she no longer took his daily paper into a retired corner of the room, and perused the shipping news, to see whether the vessel bearing the South American mails had been "spoken with," or was announced as entering the Thames. I saw, too, that, when her heavy monthly packet was at length brought to her by the postman, a look of trouble came over her face (as though she were being reminded of an old sorrow), instead of the sunny outbreak of gladness with which she used to run forward and seize the budget. I observed also that she seemed almost reluctant to set about answering Julian's letters, and would delay doing so until three or four days before the starting of the outward mail, when she had time only for a meagre epistle. I took one of these later letters in my hand in her presence after it was sealed and finished, and I balanced it on my fingers.

"What are you thinking, Tibby?" she asked, sharply.

"Rather short weight," I answered laconically, with a smile.

"Oh, Tibby," she answered, piteously, "don't watch me so! Surely you would not have me send my heaviness of spirit to him."

About this time, also, she contracted a habit of speaking of Julian as "*Poor Julian*," and "*Poor dear Julian*." I could bear with her dejection and her irritability, and what I had already come to regard as her want of courage; but this commiseration for "*Poor Julian*" I could not endure. It cut me to the heart. I know that my eyes flashed and my hands trembled when I heard the word "*poor*" applied to him; and I was afraid that I should betray to Etty how much she disturbed me by so using the word.

At last that which I had feared might happen did take place, and irritation overcame my wise resolution to control it.

"*Poor Julian! Poor Julian!*" I said, bitterly. "Can't you say *brave Julian*? That would be a better word to apply to him."

"I was thinking of him selfishly," she answered, not seeming to resent my correction. "What I really mean is—*poor Etty*."

"And why are you *poor Etty*?" I returned, with outward composure, but a tide of anger rising in my heart.

"What, Tibby," she answered, "do *you* ask me why I call myself *poor Etty*? The man that I am engaged to is *poor*, and bids fair always to be so; surely then I am guilty of no great im-

propriety in calling myself *poor*. This is the prospect before me. Four years hence Julian will return to England, and begin life again just as he was when he went on that luckless expedition to South America. He'll be an under-viewer once again in Northumberland, with an income affording him bare subsistence. And he will say to me, '*Etty, we must wait and hope! wait and hope!*' Ten or fifteen years hence I may perhaps have a permanent post, and a salary of four or five hundred pounds per annum, and then, when you are between thirty and forty, and I am between forty and fifty years old, we shall be able to marry. Only we must wait and hope!" Oh, Tibby, just think of me all this time, waiting and hoping! Am I not indeed '*poor Etty*?'"

This to me who knew so well a far deeper sorrow! whose only prospect in life was to wait—without the privilege of hoping!

It was now my turn to be selfish and to judge harshly. For a few brief minutes, that brought with them years of disaster, I could not see the heavy burden of temptation placed upon her—a burden so out of proportion to her strength. All I could think of was her cowardly repining over the sternness of her lot, and the hardships of her case, and her apparent forgetfulness of *his* trials and self-sacrificing heroism.

"Etty," I said, hotly, "you are unworthy the love of Julian. If I were betrothed to him, with the prospect of waiting and hoping through twenty years of adversity, I should not wait because the unspeakable happiness to which I looked was deferred to a vague, far-off future—because I had to battle with poverty—because, while others enjoyed the sunny places of life, I was confined to humble toil. If I waited at all, it should be because *he* was overtasked and in trouble, and had (with all the forces of an impetuous nature rendering him intolerant of delay, and impatient of obstacles in the way of his designed career) to wait and hope. I would not think of myself, but of *him*—his courage, his truthfulness, his magnificent disregard of self, and yet withal his bitter sense of deferred hope. Etty think more of *him*—less of *yourself*."

"It's a pity, Tibby," she said, scoffingly, when I had brought my imprudent and very reprehensible speech to an end, "that he did not make you an offer. You would make him a much better wife than ever I shall."

"Oh, Etty!" I exclaimed, flashing up, and as suddenly checking myself in my anger, "I would to God that he—"

"Go on, Tibby," she rejoined quickly, her violet eyes sending a shock through me.

I was silent, and, putting my hand on the table to steady myself, was in fifty seconds much calmer.

"Go on, Tibby," she again said, stooping down from the proud elegance of her height, till her eyes were on a level with mine, when she added, slowly, "You mean to say you wish he had made you an offer. You would then have accepted him?"

I drew away from her, not suddenly, and as though her inquiry had touched my conscience, but deliberately, as I might have drawn back from a passionate child. Then I said, slowly, "Etty, recall what you have said. How dare you put such a question to me?"

My words, or my manner, or some reaction

of feeling in her own breast subdued her; for without saying more she left the room. And for the second time since I had been an inmate of the cottage my grandfather's words recurred to me, with such force that they seemed to be actually uttered in my room by a small clear voice, "Let nothing separate you from Etty; cling to her, make her cling to you. To quarrel with one's own blood is to cut through one's own heart."

The look that Etty had given me was a look that I had before experienced. Her glance was the same as that my dear grandfather gave me on the evening of that day when Julian made his offer to my sister. It was the same glance, aimed at the same secret of my life; and I could not conceal from myself that, in spite of myself, I had responded to it by the same self-betraying glance which I had involuntarily directed to my dear grandfather on the occasion alluded to. My words, literally interpreted, had not published the secret, which it was clear Etty suspected, and which I would not for my life have her know. But had she seen my glance? Had she interpreted it as thoroughly as my dear grandfather had done?

The storm was at end, and when I saw Etty again she was all smiles and tenderness. But I was not easy under her tenderness. What, I thought, had softened her so to me? We never again spoke a harsh word to each other; but there was an embarrassment, of which we were both equally sensible, between us. We each knew that the other suffered under this embarrassment. We still spoke of Julian, but with caution and restraint. By degrees we got into the habit of spending our hours of recreation apart from each other, and we manifested an inclination not to intrude on each other's private moments. When Etty in her leisure time played the organ in the church I never intruded on her solitude. And she acquired a habit of tapping, ere she entered, at the door of my little closet, where I kept my books and liked to sit reading.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER AUTUMN.

It was a relief to have the children back from their Mid-summer holidays, and be at work again. A sense that life was going wrong with me, and that powers were silently in action bearing me on to unseen and unimagined disaster, robbed leisure of its sweetness. Occupation caused me, in spite of myself, to live in the present, and leave the future to take care of itself. Etty, I thought, resembled myself in this; for with the recommencement of school duties something of her old cheerfulness returned to her. For days together she would appear almost happy. But I never heard the silver laugh of her childhood ringing out peal upon peal. No, never again was I to hear that laugh!

September came, and on the first of the month Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham was shooting the partridges at Laughton. He was in deep mourning for his mother; whose death, Mr. Gurley informed us, would be assigned to the neighboring county families as a reason for their not being entertained with hospitality at the Abbey, as

they were during the previous autumn. It was understood that he had been greatly affected by Lady Caroline's death, and was desirous of quiet and retirement.

On the fourth of September he called at the Cottage, and sat with me and Etty for more than half an hour. He was pale, subdued in manner, and appeared to be very unwell; but he talked to us freely, and in a vein of flattering confidence. The cottage, he said, put him in mind of Lady Caroline, and of the happy hours she had spent with us. He was pleased to see that our garden had been kept in such good order, and he surprised us agreeably by saying that he had that morning requested Mr. Gurley to give directions for the building of a small greenhouse at the south end of the cottage.

"You see," he added, that we might make light of this kind and costly present, "I feel that in building a greenhouse for you I shall be both doing as my dear mother would wish me, and at the same time shall be only improving a pretty corner of my own property; for my mother conceived a warm affection for you, and I have decided to buy this estate when it is offered for sale."

He told us that he meant to live in strict seclusion during the six weeks or two months of his stay at the Abbey. He should shoot, for to do so would induce him to take the exercise requisite for his health; and his old friend and school-fellow, Major Watchit, would join him in the course of a day or two. But otherwise he meant to have neither friend nor amusement to help him to get through his vacation. "In fact I want to be quiet," he said, with a smile, "and Watchit's tongue won't disturb my meditations. He returns to India at the close of this year or at the beginning of next, and wishes to see as much of me as possible before we part again for a term of many years. We are strongly attached to each other. Brothers are seldom good friends; but I feel for him just that sentiment which simple people call brotherly love. All his queer ways have a charm for me. His deep imperturbable silence, covering as it does such extraordinary power, is far more pleasant to me than the talkativeness of other men."

We suggested that he would like to see Amy Reickart, but he declined having an interview with her then. He would wait a day or two, and when he wished for the child's company he would send her an invitation to the Abbey; "and possibly," he added, "when she comes you ladies will do me the honor of paying me a visit also, just as if my dear mother was —, just as you did last year." Of course Etty and I both of us replied that it would give us pleasure to accompany our pupil to his house.

At the close of the week Major Watchit came down—posting in a handsome carriage, with a valet in the seat at the back. I mention this trivial circumstance because it surprised me at the time. Major Watchit was an officer in the Indian army, a service that did not rank so high thirty years since as it does now; and from that fact I had inferred that Major Watchit was not rich enough to maintain an equipage, and to travel in the style of a millionaire. Indeed, I said that much to Etty when, instead of concurring with me, she answered, "Oh, he is not a poor man, but has a fine unincumbered estate. He was only a younger son when he went to

India; but the death of an uncle and an elder brother altered his circumstances altogether. He, however, likes the service too well to leave it, and he has a certain prospect of the highest promotion on his return to the East."

Etty said this in a simple enough way, but I was puzzled to account for her being so brimful of information that I had been completely in ignorance of.

"How did you know all this?" I asked.

"Mr. Petersham told me so last year," she answered.

"But you never repeated it to me till now. I never heard that Major Watchit was rich."

"If I did not speak about it, it was because I did not think it worth mentioning."

I was, however, struck at the time by the fact that Etty had never communicated her knowledge of Major Watchit's circumstances to me before, seeing that she had attained her knowledge in the previous autumn, when I thought we had scarcely a secret from each other. If she had mentioned last week or last month as the date of her enlightenment on the matter in question, I should have felt no astonishment; for since then, and even before then, I had lived by myself, and she by herself, though all the days through we were holding intercourse with each other. So soon and so completely may sisters, eating at one table and sitting by one hearth, be severed!

On Sunday Mr. Petersham and his friend made their appearance at church; but beyond returning their salute when they raised their hats to us after service in the church-yard we held no communication with them. During the following day, however, a note came to Amy Reickart inviting her to join her guardian's lunch on the morrow. Another note addressed to me, expressed a hope on the part of Mr. Petersham that I and Etty would accompany his ward to the Abbey.

"We can not both go, Etty," I said. "One of us must remain here with the children, as Tuesday is not a half-holiday."

"Oh, Mrs. Gurley will take the lessons for us," suggested Etty.

"No—no," I answered, firmly; "Mrs. Gurley has once or twice taken charge of the girls on a half-holiday, but I will not think of asking her to superintend the school. Do you accompany Amy. You'll enjoy the change."

"No, I won't seize a treat in that way, Tibby. Let us draw lots for it. Here are two pieces of paper. You hold the slips and I'll draw. Come, the long one wins!"

The drawing was in her favor; so after morning school she and Amy went to the Abbey, and returned to the Cottage for our six o'clock tea," Mr. Petersham and Major Watchit accompanying them as far as the church. During the next six weeks the same invitation was repeated five times to Amy, and the child on each occasion of being so summoned went to her guardian's house attended by Etty or myself. I acted as her escort only twice; indeed I purposely abstained from discharging that duty oftener, for I knew that the child preferred Etty to myself, and I knew that Etty liked the recreation of a visit to the great house.

I therefore saw very little of the two gentlemen, and Etty, as I imagined, also saw less of

them than she did during the previous autumn. They never stopped at our gate, leaving game for us and exchanging sentences of conversation as they did in the last shooting-season. Of course I attributed the discontinuance of these little courtesies to a careful consideration for ladies living without the protection of near relatives of the sterner sex. In past days, as I have already stated, the attentions were always offered to us under Lady Caroline's name. It was, therefore, only appropriate, now Lady Caroline was no more, that the acts of personal courtesy should come to an end. Whatever we might miss in one way, however, Mr. Petersham showed his anxiety to make up in another. The gamekeeper left us more frequent presents of game, and the gardener lavished upon us a yet greater abundance of flowers and fruit; and already, in consequence of Mr. Petersham's request, the carpenters and bricklayers were busily employed in constructing our green-house, so that we might have it in perfect order and efficiency by the commencement of the cold season.

Still the presence of Mr. Petersham in the Abbey made comparatively little difference to my life; and in Etty I observed nothing that led me to suppose she found the tenor of her days materially diversified. She did not take so much interest as I in the erection of the green-house; but she was cheerful, and continued with unbroken regularity her evening exercises upon the church organ.

As I have before stated, I left her the unbroken solitude of the church; but as I walked in the moonlight under my cottage windows, after having put my babes to bed, I would listen to the mellow tones of the organ, as its waves of deep-rolling sound passed through the open windows of the church, and through the assembly of the silent trees, and rising to the silver heavens died away in cadences of solemn sweetness. More than once I marvelled how Etty managed to win such magnificent volumes of music from the organ which, ever and again, would speak like a magnificent living creature—not like a mere contrivance of human ingenuity. "She is happy now," I said, on several different occasions, "or she could not play in that manner. She must be happy. If her heart were breaking those sounds could fill it with gladness. Perhaps she is thinking of Julian, and, sweeping in triumph over all the temptations that surround her life, is resolving to love him throughout her days on earth with all her soul and all her strength."

Ah me! even then the tempter was by her side; and she, drinking in the poison of subtle words, was forming a hideous resolve to neglect her duty to man and to God!

October came again, and with it the warmth and gladness of St. Luke's little summer. Our Michaelmas holidays we had, at the request of some of our pupils' parents, postponed for a week or ten days; but they had begun and were drawing to an end. Indeed it was the last day but one of the holidays, and I was looking forward with the appetite of a hungry person to the refreshment and solace of "another quarter's" profitable work, when all the course of my life was abruptly changed.

I took tea with Etty and Amy Reickart in the usual way, and when the moon came up to survey the tranquil earth, from which an unusually

abundant harvest had been gathered, I put on my garden cloak and hat for my customary saunter and meditations beneath the dark arms of our cedar-tree. I was in the garden more than two hours, and when I re-entered the cottage I remembered with surprise that the music of the organ had not been a part of my entertainment. It was strange; for Etty had not for weeks omitted to visit the church in the evening.

What could she be about?

As I ascended the stairs to my bedroom I tapped at her door, and said, "Good-night, Etty, darling! Are you well? I haven't heard the organ to-night. What have you been doing?"

"Come in, Tibby," she responded, "and kiss me."

On this invitation I opened the door, and entering found her at her writing. She was writing on the thin paper she ordinarily used for her letters to Julian. I was glad to see that. Perhaps I was at fault in thinking that she looked happy as she raised her dear eyes to me, and said, "I am busy writing, Tibby. But come and give me a kiss. I love you, my dear, very much to-night."

"Love me so always, my beautiful sister of whom I am so proud," I answered.

She rose and embraced me very tenderly. "But you may not make me play, Tibby," she said, "for I am in the *humor* to write."

I took the hint, saying lightly, as I left the room, "Etty, tell *him* that his old friend wishes him to remember her affectionately."

I meant these words as they were spoken—lovingly; but she started from them as a patient starts from an electric shock. Her emotion, as far as its outward exhibition is concerned, was not of two seconds' duration; but it taught me a cruel lesson.

We exchanged the words "good-night" again, and then I went to my room, saying to myself, "This is a torture greater than I can endure. What! I may not even mention *his* name to her—may not even send a word of love to him! When they are married I must live apart from them. Oh, merciful Father, take this anguish from me!"

Was it accident, or was it that guarding and All-mighty power whose grandeur is best seen by his feeble creatures in the care he takes of "little things," that led me to my cabinet of sacred treasures, and caused me to open a book and turn to a leaf on which a dried rose was pressed and fixed? The rose had been given to me by one I loved well, and beneath it were written these words: "The lesson of the rose. There is no lot in life so stern, and cold, and hard, but it has somewhere a warm and secret corner in which human affection can blossom."

"Oh, dear, dear grandfather!" I cried, "can not you come down to me from heaven and teach me how to *cling* to Etty?"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST BLOW.

"Run and call Miss Etty, and scold her for being so late, my dear little friend Amy," I said to Amy Reickart, as we met in the breakfast-room the next morning.

Etty was usually an early riser. But knowing how she was occupied after we had parted on the previous night, I had no difficulty in finding a reason for her absence from the breakfast-table, although the clock on the mantle-piece had struck half past eight o'clock. It was clear that she had written so late that she had either overslept herself, or was with design prolonging her rest on that last morning of the holiday, in order that she might begin "the quarter" with a full stock of physical vigor.

"I have tapped at her door six times, Miss Tree," said Amy, returning from her mission, "and she doesn't answer me. Shall I go in? I should like."

"Certainly. Go in, Amy, and shake her well, and call her a lazy, naughty girl," was my answer.

Amy ran off in high glee with these second instructions. They were evidently to her mind, for she was Etty's pet, and they often had "a good game of play" together.

"Miss Tree, she isn't there!" cried Amy, returning quickly from her second mission, with an expression of unusual animation and guileless excitement in her pretty "child's face," "and I don't believe she has been in bed. At least it's all just as neat as if it hadn't been used. The counterpane is all smooth, without a rumple, and there was nothing on it but this note."

"Give it to me, child!" I exclaimed, springing forward and clutching the paper in a manner so unlike my usual self that Amy was frightened, and began to cry.

Here is a copy of the letter I took from the child's hand, sealed and directed to me:

"DEAR TIBBY,—You will not see me again for a long time, perhaps not for many years. As to whither I am going, for what object, and under what conditions, I can not tell you more than you will learn from the circumstances of my departure. This reserve is forced upon me, and is necessary.

"Wait patiently, dear Tibby, and think of me as kindly as you can, until I may tell you all the particulars of my conduct—all the considerations that have induced me to leave you in a manner that you will be tempted to stigmatize as heartless and dishonorable.

"I have already written to Julian, telling him that I can never be his wife. The step that I have now taken shows that I never really loved him—indeed, shows that I am incapable of loving him as he deserves. If I could persuade myself that he would forgive the wrong I've done him and—(yes, I will write it)—the *shame* I have brought upon him, and so far be led by the power of old associations and the memory of the strong friendship of his boyhood as to confer on you the affection which I have rejected, I should have one consolation in a life which, however brilliant it may eventually be, will have many sorrows, much bitter humiliation, and countless hours of regret.

"Dear Tibby, do think charitably of me. Try to remember only the best of me. If I were like you, you would have nothing but what is best to remember.

"I will write to you, occasionally, from abroad. But you will only seldom hear from me—not oftener than once a year. ETTY."

I was still standing, dizzy from the first reading of this letter, when my house-maid entered with a frightened look and told me that Mr. Petersham was in the drawing-room and wished to see me instantly.

I had not had an interview alone with him in that room since the day when he called to arrange about placing Amy Reickart with me. It was strange I should remember that, as I entered the drawing-room on the present occasion. It was strange that, as I looked on the mourning in which he was now attired, I should remember every article of the lighter costume he then wore. Even still more unaccountable it may appear to some, that ever and again, while I spoke to Mr. Petersham, my scared eyes appeared to me to rest on Lady Caroline (dead, poor lady, and at rest), sitting on the sofa.

I can remember almost every thing, even the most trivial and unimportant matters connected with that interview, save the exact words spoken to me by Mr. Petersham. Of them I can only remember the purport. He told me that on being roused by his servant that morning at an early hour he had learned that Major Watchit, without having communicated his intention of leaving the Abbey either to him or to the house-keeper, had taken his departure on the previous night, shortly after the family had retired to rest. He and the Major separated for the night at half past ten, and the Major left the Abbey in his traveling carriage shortly after midnight, four post-horses having been brought to the Abbey, for the Major's service, from the Blue Boar. Surprised at the intelligence, Mr. Petersham had sent for the landlord of the inn, and had learned from him that the post-boys first conveyed the Major to the great gate of the park, near the church, and there remained for more than an hour—the carriage and the horses being drawn up under the cover of the trees, and the Major himself standing at the heads of the leaders. At the expiration of from an hour to an hour and a quarter a lady came into the avenue, through the gate from the road, closely wrapped in a dark traveling cloak and with a veil drawn over her face. A few words passed between Major Watchit and the lady, when he handed her into the carriage and took a seat by her side. As soon as the Major's valet had shut the carriage and sprung into his seat behind, "the boys" (who had not up till that time learned their destination) were ordered to make all speed along the London road to Shortfield-Buzzard. On reaching Shortfield-Buzzard, fresh horses and boys were taken, those in the service of the landlord of the Blue Boar being dismissed by the valet, with an additional crown-piece for each boy.

The post-boys, on being examined by Mr. Petersham, stated that they could not state positively who the lady was, but they believed she was one of the Miss Trees—the tall and beautiful Miss Tree. The lady's height and figure, which distinguished her from any other lady in or near Loughton, contributed to their formation and adoption of this suspicion; but they were chiefly led to their opinion by the gossip of the town, and by their knowledge that Major Watchit had of late been in the habit of meeting Miss Tree in the church and playing the organ with her.

The landlord of the Blue Boar, on being re-

examined by Mr. Petersham as to the rumors mentioned by his boys, stated that it was well known in the town that Major Watchit had frequently played the organ at the time the younger Miss Tree was accustomed to practice on the instrument, and while that lady was in the church. There had in consequence been much idle gossip among his customers; but he (the landlord) knowing the high character the lady bore, and that she had been made known to Major Watchit by Lady Caroline Petersham, and was moreover a lady highly esteemed by all the gentry of the town, had discountenanced such impertinent conversation.

I can recall that Mr. Petersham uttered some vague words, which led me to exclaim, "Oh, Sir, you can not suspect that! You can not suppose my sister would be so base—so unutterably wicked!" I remember, too, that he tried to soothe my agitation, endeavoring to reassure me with various futile words of solace, telling me that society would exempt me from all blame, that I was an object of commiseration, that he would still continue to give me his countenance, and hoped that I would still take charge of his ward. I remember feeling insulted by these paltry suggestions.

More I can not recall, save that I was uttering some incoherent words of shame and anger, when Mr. and Mrs. Gurley entered the room, and Mrs. Gurley clasped me in her arms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FLIGHT.

Was I right in christening this book "Fact"—stern, hard fact—breaking down every creation of hope in which my spirit had sought refuge from its trouble? Or was I wrong not to call it "Shame?"

Dear Mrs. Gurley remained by my side in the first hours of my anguish and humiliation, opposing her pure womanly goodness to all the shafts that idle curiosity aimed at me. She did not essay to comfort me with her lips, but contented herself with shielding me from pain—by action. I do not think she uttered half a dozen sentences throughout the whole of that horrible day, but permitted me to lie upon the sofa undisturbed by idle words. She busied herself at my writing-desk with pen and paper, sitting with noiseless determination at her work, and only now and then turning upon me a look of tender but unobtrusive concern. "The notes to the pupils' friends, postponing the reassembling of the school till further notice," she said, curtly, on rising from the desk (after two hours' work) with a handful of letters. Having dispatched the letters, she returned and took a chair by the window, from which she could command a view of the entrance of the garden, and see every one who approached the house. Of course the callers at the Cottage were frequent that morning; but none of them, save Mrs. Gurley, approached my room. Noiselessly she left me at the approach of every visitor, and having firmly kept off the intruder by the brief announcement that "I was too ill to be disturbed," returned to her post of silent observation. The hours passed on, and the sun was beginning to decline in the

west, throwing a soft splendor over the trees and water of the park, when the kind lady brought me a small tumbler of hot negus, and said, "Drink that, dear. You may trust me. I am not a *troublesome* nurse." It was impossible to refuse obedience to a request so preferred; and in docile fashion, like a child, I drank off the compound and was revived by it. "Amy Reickart—where is she?" I asked, a dull sense of social responsibility coming over me for the first time since I had received the awful news. "At my house, dear. She's with my children, and will be well taken care of. You have no business to think about. I and Gurley will manage every thing for you." Thus did the merciful woman think for me and act for me.

I remained shut up and strictly defended from intrusion for two days, during which time I became so calm that I was astonished at myself. I recognized all the aspects of my calamity, and I looked at them steadily, even as I would advise every woman to face her sorrow and examine it, not shrinking from it like a coward. I asked myself in silence—What could I do? What might I do? What ought I to do? What should I do? And I answered all these questions for myself to the best of my ability; and having answered them, I decided on the course I would adopt, having frequently on my knees, in earnest prayer, asked God to guide, protect, and help me.

On the third day Mrs. Gurley left me (as the afternoon wore on toward the evening), promising that she would see me early the next day. Ere she departed I kissed her, and made her see—as far as poor feeble words and looks could do so—how deeply I was moved by her goodness.

"To-morrow, dear," she said, "I shall bring my little girls with me. It will do you good to kiss them again." At which womanly speech, so full of poetry, so eloquent of that which every good woman knows to be the guiding sentiment of a good woman's heart, I almost broke down; when Mrs. Gurley, seeing my fortitude so severely tried, abruptly left me.

That evening I wrote two letters in the following order:

No. 1.

"DEAR MR. AND MRS. GURLEY,—I shall have left Laughton by the night-mail some hours ere you read this. You will not be angry with me for thus taking leave of you. I can not live in Laughton or in any place where my history and shame are known. I am well assured that every one would be very, very kind to me; but I could not bear their kindness—even your sympathy, were I near you, would be torture to me. In London I shall seek for some honest employment by which I may earn my bread so long as it may seem right to my Heavenly Father to keep me here; and I trust that the way may be shown me to do more good to my fellow-creatures than in my careless and happy childhood I have ever done them.

"Dear Mr. Gurley, I leave to your strong friendship for me the task of settling my affairs in Laughton. My debts are very few, amounting in all to not a tenth of what the furniture of the Cottage will sell for. Be good enough to dispose of the furniture, and after paying the

tradesmen their bills, place the rest of the money obtained by the sale to my account at the bank, where I already have (thanks to your goodness!) more than £300. The money can remain where it is. Half of it belongs to poor Etty, and perhaps she will one day need the whole. Oh, God have mercy on her and protect her!

"For myself—dear good friends, I beg you to dismiss anxiety for me. I have an ample supply of money. If ever I should need more than my labor supplies me with, I promise to write to you and ask you to remit me some of my store. I will write to you occasionally to assure you of my well-doing; and if ever I really stand in need of a friend in London, I will apply to Mrs. Gurley's cousin in Oxford Street, whose address I have by me. Don't condemn me for my flight. You know I am not ungrateful to you. But I must bury myself until this dark cloud has passed away from the eyes of all who know me.

"Dear Mrs. Gurley, if ever you are sad, by day or by night, remember your kindness to me in the days of my affliction. Oh! dear, dear woman, the angels round the throne of Heaven have recorded it! God bless you.

"Your loving, grateful friend,

"TIBBY TREE."

No. 2.

"DEAR JULIAN,—The same mail that brings you this letter brings you another from my poor, wretched sister who has separated herself from you forever, and from me also forever, unless misery that I dare neither name nor think of should make her need again the sister she has fled from. Perhaps she may have told you more of her movements than she has imparted to me. All I know of them is gained from the letter she left for me to read after her flight (a copy of which I send you), and from the meagre information of the servants who aided her in her clandestine departure with Major Watchit.

"Dear Julian, in my present deep horror of shame I think more of your misery than her sin or my own disgrace. My conscience tells me that since you left us I have neither overlooked, nor neglected, nor omitted any thing the performance of which, or attention to which, appeared to me likely to keep her love of you alive in her heart, and to make her worthy of you. Indeed, I have been your true, zealous, faithful friend, even as I was in our childhood, ere we spoke together in Lymm Hall Gardens. Do believe this of me. I implore you to believe this of me.

"In a few hours I shall leave Laughton. I could not endure in my degradation the pity of those who have known me in my honor. What consolation would it be to me that the charity of my old friends and new acquaintances exempted me from the ignominy of participation in, or connivance at, my sister's guilt? How could it comfort me to know that the finger of scorn avoided me only that it might point the more directly at the poor misguided child, whose shame is mine, even as her sufferings, if I ever hear of them, will be shared by me. I intend to seek the means of livelihood in London, where I shall enjoy the best chance of escaping the recognition of those who have ever heard of me, or Laughton, or dear Farnham Cobb. When you

return to England do not try to hunt me out. If you discovered me I should shrink from you and feel for you as an enemy. Forget, Julian, the little girl who played with you in your boyhood, and the woman who shared your confidences in early manhood. Both for me and for yourself it is right that you should, by a strong effort of your mighty will, wipe out the past from your memory. You can make for yourself another and brighter career than any you hoped for with my sister for your wife. The God who orders all things for us, and who even in this work of sorrow has a beneficent purpose, can still lead your steps to gladness. But if all your after-days here below are darkened—dear, dear Julian, bear in your mind that the longest life here is but a brief sojourn, and that when the toil and anguish of the Christian's saddest lot have terminated he goes home to a loving Father, who will, even as His promises are sure, comfort him and make him glad forever.

"Your old faithful friend,

"TIBBY TREE."

Having written these letters I packed up, in a small case, a few articles of wearing apparel, and selected from my limited wardrobe a durable dress of black merino, which I had relinquished in the preceding spring when I cast aside the mourning dresses made in respect for my dear grandfather. I furnished up also my old black bonnet and winter cloak of black cloth.

These preparations accomplished, I waited patiently till the clock in the church-tower struck the half hour after midnight. The maids after bringing me my supper, according to Mrs. Gurley's directions, had retired to rest three hours before, and the Cottage was throughout as tranquil as the sleep of innocence. With a candle in my hand I crept through the rooms, taking a last look at the little house and the vacant bedrooms; Etty's deserted bed, with the pillow on which she had so often laid her golden hair; the dining-room, with a crayon sketch of Etty on the wall; the school-room, with the arm-chair in which Etty used to sit at the head of her class; the little kitchen in which Etty would sometimes make herself so happy with the bustle of housewifery. Through all these rooms I went, gazing at them sadly. Then I returned to my bedroom, and having arrayed myself in deep mourning, already mentioned, I considered whether I had forgotten any thing. Yes. There were two things I would take with me, out of my cabinet of treasures—Julian's letters, and the book in which I had put "the rose." All the other things in the cabinet Mrs. Gurley might inspect, and do what she thought right with them. But *his letters* (the letters I had determined to give to *her* on her next birthday) I would still keep. And I would not give up the lesson of the rose. "There is no lot in life so stern, and cold, and hard but it has somewhere a warm and secret corner in which human affection can blossom!" Surely I needed the comfort of that lesson more than ever!

There was just enough unappropriated room in the packing-case for the letters and the manuscript book. Having put them in the case and duly locked it, I secretly—as secretly as Etty had departed a few nights before—left the Cottage. The night-mail, I knew, changed horses at the

Blue Boar at two o'clock: so I had ample time to walk the mile between the cottage and the tavern. I found, however, my packing-case heavier than I had anticipated. Its weight compelled me to "change hands" frequently, and made very acceptable the brief rest I indulged in while I posted my letters—No. 1 and No. 2—at the post-office in the High Street.

When I reached the Blue Boar the night-mail was due, but it had not arrived. I entered the booking-office and asked if I could have an inside place. The clerk stared at me with surprise, as he well might, for he doubtless knew me, and then answered that he could not answer me till the arrival of the coach. As he was still speaking the mail dashed up, and the clerk ran out to see whether there was a vacant place for me. To my great relief I heard the coachman respond, with an exclamation of anger, that he hadn't a single inside passenger. That was a comfort. So I paid my fare—£2 10s.—out of the £25 I had in my pocket, and, having induced the guard to place my packing-case under the seat, I slipped into the coach, and throwing myself back in a dark corner, hoped to escape observation.

Between "The Cottage" and the Blue Boar I had not encountered a single individual of any kind whatever. Not a foot was to be heard in the High Street save my own; and the clouds, hanging in thick masses above, effectually curtailed the moon and stars. At the booking-office, however, there was some bustle with the hostlers, and stable-helpers, and two or three young men who stood about smoking cigars.

Sitting in the coach, I listened with a beating heart to the clatter of the horses' feet as they came from or entered the yard of the Blue Boar, and to the conversation of the coachman with the guard, office-clerk, and loungers. The brilliant lamps of the mail and the lanterns of the hostlers enabled me, sitting in the darkness, to discern all that went on at the door of the hotel, and gave a picturesque effect to the pavement, and the tavern walls, and the people—all which objects, even then, I remarked.

"It'll be a rough night," said the coachman, drawing on his huge white over-coat, abounding in capes.

"Ay; but it was a splendid sunset and evening," said the guard.

"That won't make the night any the better, or the morning either," replied the coachman, surlily. "Who's inside?"

"One passenger—a lady," replied the guard.

"Come; no old joke like that."

"Nonsense, mate, I don't mean the mad woman. You know there *is* a passenger. And so I answer to your question—one small lady, with a small leather packing-case."

"Umph! that all?" answered the surly coachman. "Better luck then for my horses."

As he said this the coachman and guard went together into the Blue Boar for a glass, and during their absence I heard the following conversation carried on in mysterious mutterings and whispers, by three voices, close to the coach-window—the state of the atmosphere testifying that the voices were intimately connected with a strong smell of tobacco smoke.

First voice. "Nonsense; yer caan't mean it?"

Second voice. "Brought all her luggage her-

self, I tell you—paid her fare for London, £2 10s., just as if she could buy the whole county. And now she's off to meet her precious sister."

Third voice. "Well, I'm blowed. Can't make it out. Who'd ha' thought it? Any how the money isn't drawn. There warn't no check presented at four o'clock this afternoon."

First voice. "That's a rummy go. Surely they won't think the swag beneath their notice."

Second voice (bitterly). "Pooh! I know what's what. That money'll all be drawn fast enough. Leave them alone for that. Didn't I tell you that's how she would run? didn't I say—'Keep your eye on the night-mail for one week, and you'll see what you will see?' There were some as laughed. But you see I've caught my bird—Ah! she's just as bad as the pretty one."

Third voice. "She's worse: for she isn't pretty, and hasn't in consequence no temptation to go wrong."

First voice. "Caarn't we see her? I should like a sight on her afore she goes."

Second voice. "Wait a moment, stupid! The guard 'll be here directly with a light."

Third voice (triumphantly). "Well, we're ahead of the town—respecting the latest intelligence. How mad Tom Chivers 'll be!"

The second voice was right. In another minute the guard came and put a lamp into the coach.

"I would rather be in the dark," I said hurriedly to the guard.

"It's against orders, Miss," he answered, civilly. "I should like to oblige you, but my orders are, always to light the inside when there's an inside passenger."

Of course I had nothing to do but to consent to the inconvenient arrangement. The lamp was a dim one, but it was sufficient for the purpose of the possessors of the voices, who crowded round the window and stared at me as though I were a famous criminal. In one of them I recognized the under-clerk of the Laughton bank. Fortunately my veil was a thick one, and I had not to endure their impertinent curiosity long, for at the very moment that they were gratified with "a sight" of me the rain fell down in torrents, and swept them away like leaves; and before the storm had abated the four horses of the night-mail were galloping out of the town on the London road.

The last house of any importance at the London end of the straggling town was the grammar-school, where Julian and his brother had received their education. As the night-mail rattled under its walls I recalled how, in the previous Mid-summer holidays, I had obtained access to the deserted play-ground, and had found, cut in the red brick of the boundary wall, the inscription "Julianus Gower fecit hoc, May 22, 18—." He had cut the inscription when he was quite a little fellow.

BOOK IV.

PART THE FIRST OF A WOMAN'S STORY:—BEING THE NARRATIVE OF OLIVE BLAKE'S SIN.

CHAPTER I.

A SOCIAL QUESTION.

THERE has of late years been more than an average force of satire directed against mercenary marriages, and those measures which, in an artificial state of life, parents, anxious to secure the happiness of their offspring, employ to secure their daughters against the miseries of ill-conceived and imprudent matrimonial alliances. In some cases this satire is a protest against the conduct of people of the opulent classes, who object to unite themselves with individuals of humble rank and necessitous condition. Sometimes it seems to be little more than the petulant arrogance of young men, smarting under the humiliating pressure of discontented poverty, and insolently proclaiming their natural right to lead off, as wives, ladies whose natural and adventitious endowments render them of distinction in the society of the distinguished. Occasionally it presents itself with more modesty, and adopts language closely resembling that of common sense. The lesson, however, that it would teach, whether the language of mere bombast, or the sarcasms of wounded vanity, or the simple phrases of childish sentimentality be employed, is always this—that *marriages de convenance* are detestable compacts—detestable be-

cause they set at defiance the grandest and most beautiful laws of nature—and thrice detestable because their result is an enormous harvest of human wretchedness.

I must beg leave to refuse my assent to this general proposition.

I am not sure that *marriages de convenance* are arrangements to be discountenanced. Looking for facts from which I may generalize, I read (and I do not blush to own it) the revelations of the Divorce Court—where broken vows, brutal passions, satanic vengeance, vile desires, loathsome appetites, contemptible caprice, petty peevishness, and all the various forms of evil that occasionally fester under the fair exterior of domestic life, are put before the eyes of vulgar spectators in all their hideous and repulsive reality. I read these revelations, carefully studying the histories, so far as I can arrive at them, of the unhappy creatures whose crimes and wrongs are held up to inspection, and systematically endeavoring to trace to its source the moral defilement thus exhibited. But it is only seldom that my search for "the beginning" leads me to the kind of matrimonial union against which our novel-writing moralists are so severe. On the whole, the love-match, with its bower of bliss, seems to be a more frequent commencement than the *mariage de convenance*, with its care-

fully-prepared settlements, to those painful tragedies which close with judgment in a law court and sensation on the part of outraged society.

Frequently, of course, the ordinary matrimonial alliance, which May-Fair practically applauds and theoretically condemns, has an unhappy conclusion. But do not other unions turn out ill? And is it not more than probable that the misery of many of these loudly-assailed "family arrangements" which *do* result in disaster is to be attributed not so much to the nature of the compact, as to the fact that the parties to them have not from the outset of life been soberly and appropriately trained for entering into them? I do not venture to make any decided answer to this question, for I am disinclined to dogmatize to society on matters of high public importance. I would rather leave the discussion and settlement of such grave affairs to the strength and earnestness of the masculine intellect. All that I say here I would offer only by way of suggestion; and it would greatly pain me to have an undue value given to my expression of regret that English girls of the higher ranks, while they are really destined for *mariages de convenance*, should be in their first day-spring of feeling either educated and expressly instructed to abhor them, or at least be encouraged to adopt the sentiment that it is more noble for a woman to remain in a single state all her days than to marry a man who does not in every respect come up to her ideal of manly perfection. I can not help thinking that the elders of society manifest some mental confusion, and still more moral cowardice, on this subject of matrimony. Since experience and usage support the system of prudent matrimonial compacts, why are satirists permitted, without reproof, to brand them with the odious term of *mercenary*? why does society give an insincere countenance to the calumny? and, above all, why are girls, who are appointed to live and move in a world of artificial construction, incited to shape their course according to the dictates of their natural susceptibilities, and to embrace views suited only to a state of society very much better, or a state of society very much worse, than that which we at present enjoy?

"Here," my friends will say, "is Olive Blake flying again in the face of the world, according to her wont! Has she not sufficiently scandalized society by publishing her last volume of poems with Greek notes? Must she now be pugnacious against the existing order of things on the subject of the marriage bond? What can be her motive?"

My motive, my kind questioners, is simply this. I am going to tell the story of my early life—how I was betrothed while I was in the nursery, how, at the direction of a dearly beloved father, I was married to a man almost if not quite old enough to be my sire, and how my marriage—worse than no marriage—brought upon me suffering and shame immeasurable. The course of my tale will point me out as the victim of a *mariage de convenance*. And if it were not for the foregoing prelude, my autobiographical sketch would lead my readers to infer that I altogether condemn a system which bore hardly on myself, whereas I do not presume to make my misfortunes a rule for all the world. For the system, I am undecided whether it be

good or bad. I have therefore guarded myself against a misconstruction that would represent me as attacking that system. Here is my motive for being "pugnacious against the existing order of things."

CHAPTER II.

A FAMILY COMPACT.

My childhood was so happy, and at the same time so unlike that of most English girls of my time, that it demands a few words of retrospective description. English parents are rapidly improving, and the cross-grained, churlish, egotistic, selfish English parent is fast becoming an extinct species of our national humanity; but thirty, forty, and fifty years since (the further back one goes to Aubrey, and beyond him to Sir Roger Ascham, and beyond Sir Roger to the Paston Letters, one finds the unpleasant features of parental and filial relations to increase in number and enormity), childhood was too frequently a long period of mortification and bitter experience. To be badgered incessantly with "you *might* do this," and "you *must* do that," to be twitted and taunted about defects consequent on a feeble constitution, to be convicted by circumstantial evidence of disobedience, insubordination, "queerness," and all the other horrible crimes which persons of tender years can perpetrate, to be goaded into rebellion, and then starved and dark-closeted into a servile prostration of individual will—this was the ordinary childhood of half a century since. Let the merry, petted little tyrants of the present generation in due course learn that such was the case, and the memory of far-distant nursery gladness, standing out in contrast with the memory that *might have* occupied its place, will render doubly pleasant the task of ministering to the failing powers of those who cherished them tenderly when they were little ones.

Fortunately my father was a man, in all that respected his paternal character, far before his time. A mother I had never known, for my birth was her death; but my father's tenderness more than supplied the loss I thus sustained. My wishes were never thwarted. If their gratification would have been hurtful, devices were employed to make me forget them, but they were never met with harsh and unsympathetic refusal. Speaking after the light of their days, my father's friends of the softer sex impressed upon him that he would spoil me, and that under his too indulgent régime I should grow up capricious, self-willed, opinionated, and violent. There was just enough natural tendency to these faults in me to justify the apprehensions of the good ladies; and I do fully believe that any kind of education, different from my father's lenient and enlightened system, would have brought me up to the full standard of the evil predicted of me. As it was—thanks to my father's consistent gentleness!—I enjoyed my childhood thoroughly, and entered life with a temper unembittered and slow to take offense, although it was constitutionally excitable, and sometimes even irritable.

As the only child of Matthew Blake, the wealthy banker of the firm of "Petersham and Blake," I was reared in luxury, and with all those best means of educational progress which

money can purchase. I do not think any one would call me "plain;" I am tall, and have a face which, though it is not altogether free from the signs of mental trial and bodily suffering, is sufficiently well-looking; but I am no beauty. Even at seventeen I could not have persuaded myself that I was a beauty. Whatever natural endowments I have beyond the ordinary run of women may be summed up thus: A good memory, some imagination, a strong taste for the quiet pursuits of the study and the studio, a considerable natural faculty for music, and a very unusual amount of perseverance. With these gifts (the most important of which is the last) I have achieved a reputation for genius, without having one solitary spark of it; and I believe that any woman similarly qualified might do the like. I do not know whether this assurance will be a consolation to any of those "objectless spinsters" who just now are raising their eyes from the earth's surface, and are imploring the moon to give them something to think about; but I trust it may.

In my education I was singularly fortunate—far more so than the majority of English ladies can hope to be. For every accomplishment I had a professor of the very best kind. Masters came from London to my father's villa at Fulham, from the time that I was six till I was sixteen, and instructed a willing pupil. Sometimes as many as three masters visited me in the course of the day. I had three music-masters, who came to me three times a week—one for the piano-forte, one for the harp, and one for singing. A distinguished Royal Academician instructed me in the use of the pencil; and Girtin, till his genius was gathered from us by an untimely death, taught me to paint with water-colors. An accurate knowledge of French and Italian was imparted to me by professors of note. German I did not acquire till a comparatively recent date; but before I was fourteen I had gained my father's permission to learn Latin, under the guidance of an Oxford scholar. I had also riding masters and dancing professors in continuous succession.

It may not, however, be imagined that I was overdone with instruction—that I was crammed. So far was this from being the case, I never had one minute's experience of school-room headache. My masters were agreeable, entertaining gentlemen, and were paid liberally to amuse as well as to teach me. I did, and they did, just as much as I liked, and no more. They seemed almost my playmates, I laughed and prattled with them so freely. I was to them "Matthew Blake's little heiress," "Matthew Blake's precocious little child," and they had ample reasons for striving to make me like them. My father also was at great pains to find me abundance of cheerful society, and I had a long list of acquaintances and "dearest friends" of my own age. On the amount and regularity of my daily exercise my dear father was very particular. Every day, when the weather permitted me to do so, I rode at least twelve miles about the neighborhood on one of my ponies, a dainty little page-groom, booted and spurred, and similarly mounted, following close at my heels—while, for greater security, one of my father's grooms, or the old coachman, rode behind us, at a distance of fifty yards. In wet weather I

took walking exercise, skipped ropes, and rode my ponies in the centre of the prodigious conservatory, which had been built as large as a riding-school for my express accommodation.

Perhaps, however, the element of my early education which had the most permanent influence on my character was my dear father's treatment of me. He always displayed to me the respect due to a *woman*. He sometimes, when I was a very little one, nursed me on his knee, and to the last he would be playful to me in words and acts; but he never caused me to feel that I was only a child. I always dined with him when he was alone. One of my earliest recollections is of sitting at the head of his table (when I could not have been more than five years of age), while he and I gravely pledged each other—he, drinking a glass of wine, and I putting my lips to a little wine-glass, filled with toast-water. I remember that occasion also by the fact that my father's sister (Mrs Wilby, who died lately in extreme old age) was of the party, and looked on with surprise. I had never before seen her, and was informed after dinner that she had come to reside with us, and act as my companion and chaperon. And in such capacity of grave domestic friend the kind old lady continued to live with me till the time of her death.

In the same way that Matthew Blake drank to his little child's health, he talked to her with the gravity which children always enjoy, but are seldom honored with, in intercourse with their elders. He always conversed with her, as far as it was possible to do so, on subjects which interested him, and in such a manner that they interested her. He was a connoisseur and collector of works of art, having in his elegant and spacious villa many valuable paintings, and a precious museum of rare engravings, old etchings, coins, and curious gems. About all these he used to speak to his precocious little girl in so entertaining a manner that she could not do otherwise than remember what he said, and in time came to know almost as much about them as her tutor. As years went on he introduced her to matters of business, explaining to her all the phenomena and mysteries of the credit system which sustains the gigantic operations of modern commerce. It is no exaggeration of the strange truth to say that, when the little girl was thirteen or fourteen years of age, she knew as much about the history and worth of public securities, the modes by which governments raise loans, and the means by which speculators turn such loans to their advantage, as most young men do who spend all their hours in the atmosphere of Lombard Street.

Among my other absurd manifestations of precocity was a taste for scribbling. The composition of my first poem I can not recall; but my first volume of poetry was printed when I was only thirteen years of age. The edition consisted of *twelve* copies, which, it is needless for me to say, were jealously confined to private circulation. I have my fondly proud father's copy now in my possession, with the following entry on the fly-leaf, in his handwriting: "My wonderful child's poems, printed in the first month of her fourteenth year.—Matthew Blake."

I was just sixteen years of age when this indulgent father, as we sat over the dessert one

winter evening, said to me: "Olive, I have asked Mrs. Wilby to leave us alone for a few hours, and to see that we are not disturbed. Can you spare me that time for the consideration of important business?"

"Certainly, dear papa," I answered, leaving my seat at the head of the table, and taking possession of a chair close to him.

"That my health has long been in a precarious state you are well aware, Olive?"

"You are not worse?" I inquired, remembering, as I did so, that for several days past he had been more pale and thoughtful than usual.

"No, not worse than I knew I should be, only nearer my end. My darling girl, it is now ten years since I first ascertained that I had within me the seeds of a malady that would prevent my seeing extreme old age. Had I been nervous or depressed by the discovery, you would have lost me years since; but I am of an equable temperament, and in every division of my life I have had cause for contentment, so I have had a longer term of pleasurable existence than my physician ten years since thought probable or even possible. The time has now come, however, when I must resign myself to a termination of this life. Another medical opinion has confirmed the decision of my old and trusted physician that I can not continue here much longer. Most likely the course of the next twelve months will make you an orphan."

I was silent, and gave no sign of emotion save that I took my father's right hand and pressed it against my lips. I knew that any stronger expression of my grief and dismay would trouble him, and I felt that he had only begun his important communications, and needed all his strength and mental composure for what he had still to say.

"Thank you. You are a brave girl," he said, with an air of relief, as he read in my face no signs of womanly weakness, and saw in my eyes no lack of filial concern; "I knew I could trust you. Now the worst of my evening's business is over."

He mixed himself a tumbler of wine-and-water, and having deliberately refreshed himself with a portion of it, he turned to me and commenced a statement of his wishes with regard to me that effectually controlled my course when he was in the grave.

"I have never treated you as a child is ordinarily treated. You have been my *friend* as well as my child; and young as you are I have few secrets from you. I am now going to give you a last proof of my confidence by telling you the contents of my will, and the reasons that have induced me to make it. I am now just sixty years of age. Five-and-forty years ago I entered the bank of the late Mr. Petersham in Lombard Street, with a salary of £80 per annum, and no prospect of any advancement save by a display of intelligence and zeal. I was then a poor lad, without a single wealthy relation or opulent friend; whereas now, though I am still only approaching the entrance to old age, I have rather more than £350,000—all that wealth, and the luxury with which I have lived for more than a quarter of a century, being a consequence of my connection with a master able to discern business capacity in a servant, and generous enough to reward it with a liberal hand. I do

not need on the present occasion to describe minutely or even to name the services which, while I was still only a clerk, I was able to render my benefactor, and which earned for me his confidence and even his gratitude. It is enough for me to say that they led to my obtaining a partnership in his business, and to my being now one of the most influential men in the city of London. Affection not less than pride made me, as they still make me, value highly my position as a member of the house of 'Petersham and Blake.' The strong attachment I formed for the late Mr. Petersham—whom it is now as much my pride as ever it was to style my benefactor—was not confined to him. When I was made a partner in the house it was with the cordial consent of the present Mr. Petersham, whom you have often seen, and who was even then his father's partner. That gentleman, though twelve or fifteen years my senior, had on my first introduction to him, as the youngest of his numerous clerks, formed a favorable opinion of me—an opinion destined slowly to become a warm and genuine friendship that, after many trials, is at the present date as steadfast as ever it was.

"You may now, Olive, dismiss from your mind (for the present) all thought of my first benefactor, as I shall henceforth speak of my relations with his son—our very dear friend, and the present head of the firm. Sound from base to summit as our firm is, and wealthy as are its members, Mr. Petersham and I have more than once discussed the effect it would have on its character if my accumulations were withdrawn from it. My wealth, I need not tell you, is trifling compared with his; but from causes which you will fully appreciate directly they are pointed out to you, his property is not so available as mine for those emergencies which frequently occur in the career of such a house as ours. Mr. Petersham's position and name in the monetary world are the affairs of generations, and he now not unnaturally is ambitious of merging his commercial honors in that patrician dignity which is the highest object of worldly ambition to a British subject. For himself he has no other wish than to die a commoner as his father did before him, but he has for years labored to attain an English peerage for—I was going to say his *son*, but it would be more right for me to say his *house*. It may be a foolish aim in the eyes of philosophy; but still it is his ambition—it is an ambition which his noble father would not have disapproved—and it is an ambition with which I heartily sympathize. My dear friend in moments of privacy and confidence has frequently said to me, 'I do not want a seat in the House of Lords for myself. I should be quite happy if I could put matters in such a train that I could feel sure my boy would arrive at the honor when I am in the grave.' And as often I have said, 'Petersham, as surely as you are my old benefactor's son and my own true friend, your ambition shall be mine.'

"To acquire influence with ministries, who are the channels through which the honors of the Crown flow to subjects, Mr. Petersham has for many years pursued the not unwise policy of purchasing landed estates, the possession of which is accompanied with the control of adjacent boroughs. A very large proportion, therefore, of his vast property has been expended on

the acquisition of land, which, from its peculiar nature, is always sold at fictitious, and frequently at enormous, prices. As a consequence of this, 'the house' so much depends—I will not say for its stability, but for its *comfort*—on my property, which, every farthing of it, is engaged in its operations, that if I were to withdraw from its capital that amount of my accumulations, which I am at liberty to withdraw at any moment I please, the result would be a serious inconvenience to Mr. Petersham, though not exactly a blow to the security of 'Petersham and Blake.' If I were to be so ungrateful and utterly dishonorable as to take the step just mentioned, my friend would have at an enormous loss to convert much of his land into personal estate; would possibly have the annoyance of witnessing 'the house' for a few weeks an object of distrust; and would certainly have to surrender his life-long schemes under circumstances that would subject him to many causes of pain, among which the ridicule of rivals would be not the least."

I now discerned one object that lay near my father's heart, and with a natural desire to show how fully I sympathized with him, and was anxious to obey every hint of his wishes, I said, "Dear father, do not trouble yourself with needless explanation. Whatever arrangement you may make of your wealth, I shall regard as best because you made it. Indeed, you oppress me with kindness in thus condescending to give me explanations on a subject which properly rests on your decision alone."

"Nay, dear Olive," he answered, with one of his sweetest smiles, "though I give you pain, and *oppress you with kindness*, I must continue; for ere I have done I have to speak to you on a subject that concerns you more nearly than gold."

Of course I was silent.

"You see, then, without more words," continued my father, "that I desire the bulk of my property to remain after my death in the hands of 'Petersham and Blake.' It still remains for me to state the conditions on which my dear friend Petersham would like that either he or his son should benefit by such an arrangement. It has long been his hope and mine that on attaining a marriageable age you would become the wife of Arthur Byfield Petersham, and share with him the dignity which we trust he will one day derive from our united wealth."

I only bowed my head at this announcement, which, I own, greatly disturbed me.

"You are young, far too young, my child," resumed my father with emotion, after a pause, "to have your head troubled with such thoughts as these. But still you are so old, that I should not like to look upon you in the last moments of my life, and know that I had kept you in ignorance of my plans for you. Between this and the hour of my death I covet a perfect confidence with you, Olive. If, when my dust is committed to the earth, it should be allowed me to hold communion with your mother, I should exult in being able to assure her that you and I were friends indeed, without one touch of fear troubling, and without one reserve limiting, our love. I could not endure on my bed of sickness to imagine you saying, after my lips had ceased to move, 'Oh that my father had told me this!'"

"You can not in your heart, Olive, for an instant suppose that I would by my will force upon you a distasteful marriage. It is true that Mr. Arthur Petersham is fifteen years your senior; but he is an honorable and highly accomplished young man, much admired in society, and one who, descended from a gentle line on his father's side, and born of a mother of a high patrician family, might, even had he no more than a hundredth part of his wealth, without presumption seek an alliance with any lady of our aristocracy. Moreover, I do not bind you to marry him. Let me tell you the provisions of my will. On my death the trustees of my property will invest £50,000 in the funds. That £50,000 and this villa, with the little land around it, will be strictly settled on you and your children, whoever he may be whom you marry. The rest of my property (which we will call £300,000) will remain invested as it is at present in the house of 'Petersham and Blake,' the same interest that is now paid upon it being still paid at certain specified periods to the trustees for your sole benefit, until you attain the age of five-and-twenty. When you have attained that age, and not before, I wish you, unless you feel an insuperable objection to do so, to marry Mr. Arthur Petersham. In case such marriage should take place, I direct that the duties of your trustees, as far as regards the capital invested in 'Petersham and Blake,' terminate—that capital, on the solemnization of the marriage, becoming without restriction of any kind the property of your husband. But now listen to me, Olive, for I come to the provisions of my will, in case the marriage I desire should not take place. Should the proposed union not eventuate through Mr. Arthur Petersham being disinclined or unable by his own act to become your husband on your attaining the age of twenty-five, the trustees named in my will are directed to withdraw the capital already mentioned from 'Petersham and Blake,' and pay it over to you for your sole and unrestricted use. In the same way if, on attaining the specified age, you should decline to fulfill your engagement with Mr. Arthur Petersham, because he has been proved guilty of certain acts (specified in my will) which would render him unfit to be your husband, you in like manner will, as under the former contingencies, obtain unlimited possession of the £300,000. On the other hand, if when you are twenty-five Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham is willing and able to marry you, and has not proved himself by the conduct specified unworthy of you, and yet you see fit to refuse to become his wife, the £300,000 invested in 'Petersham and Blake' will be his, just as if he had married you; you in such case enjoying only this villa and the £50,000 settled upon you, and such sums as have accumulated in the hands of the trustees in the discharge of their trust between my death and your reaching the age of five-and-twenty. I have also provided against another contingency. You may, before attaining the age of five-and-twenty, marry, if you are so inclined, another suitor; but in that case, if Mr. Arthur Petersham be alive, the £300,000 will be his on your attaining twenty-five years of age, just as if he had married you.

"Thus, you see, Olive, I leave you free as to the choice of your husband, though I intimate

to you in a forcible manner the man I wish you to marry. I believe that by becoming the wife of Mr. Arthur Petersham you will achieve an honorable and envied position, and be placed most favorably for enjoying life. At the same time, I wish you to exercise your own judgment as to the advisability of the step, when your judgment has arrived at maturity. I have therefore named the age of twenty-five—that is to say, your twenty-fifth birthday—as the date when you are to give your final decision on the subject. You will then be at liberty to say ‘Nay’ or ‘Yea’ as you like. Should circumstances have transpired that would indicate Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham as a man not calculated in *my* opinion to make you happy, you will be able to say ‘Nay’ without any detriment to your worldly circumstances. Should he, however, fulfill all the requirements I desire of him, and be at forty years of age as honorable and well-living a man as he is now at thirty, you will also still be able to say ‘Nay,’ at the sacrifice, truly, of magnificent prospects, but still retaining the enjoyment of wealth so considerable that, united to your personal and intellectual gifts, it will secure you another alliance—perhaps not less to be desired than a union with Mr. Petersham. My final testament is thus calculated, as far as poor human sagacity can see, to discharge my debt of love to my child, and my debt of gratitude to the family of Petersham, from whom my wealth is derived. This, dear Olive, is the explanation I wished to make. You will now be in a position to interpret the provisions of my will when I am no more, knowing, as you now do, that it has been made with two objects—first, to secure your welfare; secondly, to advance and protect the interests of our best friends.”

I have already stated that the first announcement of my father's wishes as to my matrimonial settlement greatly disturbed me. I knew Mr. Arthur Petersham intimately as a frequent visitor at Fulham, and far from having conceived a dislike to him, I found a pleasure in his society. He was, though plain and without the dignified bearing of his father, of a sufficiently agreeable appearance and address. His disposition was reputed to be amiable. He had traveled much and seen much of the world, at a time when even men of wealth were by no means so universally accustomed to travel as they are at the present time. Moreover his mother, Lady Caroline Petersham, had been always one of my dearest and most favorite friends. There was, therefore, nothing to account for my disturbance at my father's proposal, save its unexpected character and its reference to a subject which I was too much a child ever before to have thought of, and yet which, child as I was, I would rather have had left altogether to my own free-will to deal with in due time as I liked.

It was no time, however, to resent any intrusion, on the part of my beloved and indulgent father, into the secret and delicate recesses of my nature.

I therefore listened in silence. It was well I did so; for, as my dear father continued his revelations, I found that in making arrangements for the achievement of his desire he had considered with characteristic tenderness, and provided with characteristic generosity, for every contingency likely to affect my interests. *My*

dignity, *my* happiness, *my* security were the first objects of his care. He said truly that to discharge his debt of gratitude to the family from whom he had acquired so much of his life's prosperity, and who had such a strong hold on his affections, was only a second consideration.

For three minutes, at least, after my father had done speaking I sat in silence on the little low chair I had during his communications occupied by his side; and with my elbows on my knees, and my hot head resting on my hands, I thought on all I had just heard. The result of my meditations was that I rose from my seat, and having kissed my dear father, said to him, slowly and with emotion,

“Dear father, of all your innumerable proofs of affection for your child, the greatest is the confidence you have just placed in her. I will now say nothing which shall fetter my freedom of action in the future, or circumscribe that liberty of decision which you so nobly desire should be preserved to me inviolate. As for love—the love that women feel for those whom they consent to marry—from personal experience I neither know nor wish for many a day to know what it is. My poems and novels tell me that such love is an affection which even those women whose lives are governed by a strong and holy sense of duty can not always control. Perhaps on reaching the age of five-and-twenty I shall find myself unable to swear that I will love Mr. Arthur Petersham (though he be a true and honorable gentleman) as long as we shall both live. If such should be the case, I will exercise that right of rejection which my kind father has reserved for me; but at the same time I shall find it a subject of hearty congratulation that my inability to love where my father wishes me to love will not cut off, from the possession of the larger portion of his wealth, the family he loves so honorably and reasonably. But while I retain this right of final decision, I will give full weight to the words of my dear father who has reserved it to me. I will, now that I am about to enter womanhood, accustom my thoughts to picture myself as the future wife of Mr. Arthur Petersham. I will always, without violating my reason and knowledge, habitually think of him as a man worthy to be my husband, because my dear father at the present time so esteems him. I will always remember also that, in becoming his wife under circumstances which my conscience shall approve, I shall be acting in accordance with the wishes of a dear father who, in his love for me, has been more tender, and who in life has been more noble than any father I have ever seen, or read of, or can imagine.”

I was shedding foolish, idle tears when I terminated this earnest speech; and my father, taking me into his arms as if I had been a little child, fondled and caressed me, stroking my hair and kissing my forehead, and calling me his “noble Olive.”

We never again alluded to the subject of that evening's conversation, but I have the assurance—an assurance that is more than a consolation for all my subsequent suffering and disgrace—that its result was a source of great comfort to him in the concluding months of his illness.

The spring came and blossomed into summer, and the summer reddened into autumn, and the

autumn was coming to a close; and through spring and summer and early autumn we were friends, without a single reserve of confidence.

Ere the autumn closed a guileless, simple, devout man—a man of unselfish aims and noble intellect—was taken from the world; but ere his eyelids met in their last repose, he said (they were his last words), “Olive, if it be permitted me to see and know and speak to thy mother, I shall have my wish.”

CHAPTER III.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE COMPACT.

It was thus that before I was introduced into society my destination as a married woman was fixed.

On my father's death I still made Fulham my home, the villa being placed nominally under the superintendence and control of Mrs. Wilby—a quiet, amiable woman, conversant with the world, and, though she made no profession of having any element of mental superiority, closely resembling her brother (my dear father) in quickness of perception and sound judgment. It speaks more for the goodness and sweetness of her disposition than my own, that her authority over me was invariably a source of pleasure to both of us.

My life, however, was not all spent in seclusion at Fulham. I made three foreign tours, accompanied by Mrs. Wilby, and in the society of eligible persons of my own rank. Twice I paid long visits to my uncle, Mr. Martin Orger, of Shorton Park, in Northumberland; and I made other prolonged sojourns in various parts of the country. At the opening of my nineteenth year Lady Caroline Petersham took me with her to court; and up to the time of Lady Caroline's death I passed several weeks of each London season in her house in Grosvenor Square—accompanying her wherever she went in those fashionable circles, of which she had been from girlhood an admired and popular personage. Of course it was generally known that I was betrothed to Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham, but that did not preclude me from being an object of attention to gentlemen desirous of settling in life as married men. Between my twentieth and twenty-fourth year I was embarrassed and complimented with several matrimonial overtures. Far from seeming desirous of guarding me from such solicitations, Lady Caroline appeared at times almost to manifest an anxiety that I should accept one of my unauthorized suitors. Indeed, she had no especial object to serve in securing me as her son's wife. She liked me well enough; but if I chose to marry any other man, before attaining the age of five-and-twenty, or at five-and-twenty declined to be the bride of her son, the wealth he as a bachelor would acquire by my conduct would have more than compensated her for any slight chagrin she might have experienced at the defeat of the family compact. One or two things made me suspect she would have been better pleased if my father's will had fixed an earlier date for my final decision with regard to Mr. Arthur Petersham. Forty years is in truth an advanced age in a mother's eyes for the settlement of an only son;

and it more than once struck me that she would have congratulated herself on any occurrence (save, of course, that of my death) which left him free to select a suitable bride and marry without delay.

She was an amiable and impulsive woman; singularly simple in her manners, but inordinately proud of her patrician descent—and, withal, very ambitious. It was therefore not improbable that she would have preferred for her son a wife of higher lineage than Olive Blake—the banker's daughter.

I had therefore all the usual opportunities of making what is ordinarily termed a “love match.” Whatever faults I have—and they are numerous and grave—an inordinate love of money is not one of them. Rich as I therefore was in the Fulham property and the £50,000 settled upon me, and the accumulations of interest in the hands of my trustees (which, on my arriving at the age of twenty-five, amounted very nearly to another £100,000), I should never have thought of marrying Mr. Petersham simply for the sake of money. But it so happened that I never for a minute entertained a regard for any man that could of itself have induced me to neglect the fulfilment of my father's wishes. My promise to him was fulfilled to the word and the spirit. I had said to him, “I will always, without violating my reason or knowledge, habitually think of him as worthy to be my husband, because my dear father so esteems him.” Possibly I should have rebelled against a closer restriction; but my dear father had shown such care for, and confidence in me, that it became to me a sentiment of love, honor, duty, to trust with similar confidence to the wisdom of his plan. I strictly *obeyed* him—being all the while unconscious that my course was one of obedience.

The consequence was, I entered into society in a very different frame of mind from that of most girls of my rank. It never occurred to me to look for an expression of preference on the part of any of the distinguished young men I daily met; and on the occasions of my receiving such an expression, the pleasure, which I felt in a slight degree at being honored with the highest compliment that can be paid a woman, by no means repaid me for the discomfort it occasioned me. My course was marked out for me, and I felt no difficulty in keeping in it. The excitement which most young girls find in receiving—and some very few in seeking—admiration, I did not need; for I had an abundance of work to think about and to accomplish in pursuing my studies, in developing my taste for music and the fine arts, and in the composition of my published works, by which I am not altogether unknown.

Those gentlemen who had superintended my education during my dear father's lifetime were good enough to continue to give me their valued instructions.

At Fulham I had therefore plenty to do.

As for Mr. Arthur Petersham, I had always liked him as an agreeable companion; and looking to him as my future husband, I gradually, in the course of years, conceived for him a sentiment of warm kindness and genuine respect, which, though very different from my ideal of love, and far short even of that affection which I believed to exist in a world of compromises,

still appeared to me to be love. For me he always manifested a devotion passionate in its force and delicate in its expression. More than once he laughed about our slowly approaching *mariage de convenance*, and avowed that he wished such unions were more general in the world, if the feelings of those who entered them resembled his in intensity. I can honestly say, that to the very day when my illusion was rudely broken, I believed him to be deeply and genuinely attached to me. I flattered myself that his heart was, every fibre and pulse of it, under my control.

My simplicity in making this confession, and my still greater simplicity in having such a confession to make, will possibly earn for me some ridicule; but I care not, so long as they shield me from the contempt of those best and noblest daughters of Eve—who never marry save where they really love.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of my birthday I told Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham that I would be his wife; and within three months from that date we were married, during the height of the season, in St. George's church, Hanover Square. Our wedding was the affair of the week. The steps leading to the church entrance, and the pavement leading to the steps, were covered with crimson cloth; my *corps* of bridesmaids numbered some of the prettiest and best-born girls of the season; Hanover Square was blocked up with equipages of the aristocracy; the diamonds presented to me by my father-in-law were valued at £60,000; at the banquet succeeding the ceremony the "Duke" was present. But may not all these particulars be read in the daily papers of the period, which, I suppose, are stored up somewhere?

At the time of my wedding my husband was forty years of age, but he did not look so old. During the two or three years preceding the event we had perhaps seen less of each other than during the five preceding years. Affairs of business and friendship had compelled him to pass much of his time on the Continent, but nothing had occurred to throw a gloom over the sunny prospect that lay before me as we left town to spend the honey-moon at Burstead House, in Hampshire, a seat recently purchased by my husband's father.

If, on the morning of my wedding, I had asked myself—"Olive Blake, do you with all the strength of your nature love the man who, ere this day is closed, will be your husband?" I should not have been ill at ease, and should possibly have shed tears. But I didn't so examine myself, and was therefore able to keep my tears for another occasion. But this question I did ask myself on that day, even as I had often before asked it—"Olive Blake, do you believe that Arthur Byfield Petersham is a man of high principle and unblemished honor, and that you will be able throughout life to render him that allegiance, and feel for him all that confiding affection which are implied by the words 'wisely love?'" And I was able to answer confidently "Yes."

Though I am a banker's daughter, I should be sorry to gauge the strength of any of my sentiments by a mere money test; but at the same time, though I am a banker's daughter, it would cruelly wound my self-respect, and cut my wo-

manly pride to the quick, if it were to be supposed that I married Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham from mercenary considerations. Let me therefore state one fact, which at the same time points to the confidence I had in my husband as a man of honor, and to my carelessness about my own pecuniary aggrandizement. As I have already said, the accumulations of money in my trustees' hands, on my attaining my twenty-fifth birthday, amounted to nearly £100,000. This sum of money was, by the terms of my father's will, at my sole disposal; and my trustees were very anxious that ere my marriage it should be invested in the funds and settled on myself and my children. They strongly urged this course upon me, but I resolutely answered, "No; I will not have that done. I know what my dear father's wishes were with regard to his wealth and the Petersham family. The same considerations which make me Mr. Petersham's wife make me also desire that he should have unrestricted possession of that money. I can fully rely on his honor; and if some dark calamity should befall us, my house at Fulham and the £50,000 already settled on me will be an ample provision for us."

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

AFTER passing a month at Burstead House, my husband and I visited Brussels and Paris, returning to England in the middle of August, so as to be in good time for the shooting, to which sport Mr. Petersham had an attachment closely allied to devotion. Country visiting made my time pass pleasantly enough during the autumn months; and I was looking forward to a progress from the provinces to London by the opening of Parliament (my husband having been elected while on his wedding-trip to a seat in the House of Commons), when an event occurred which somewhat deranged our plans. Mr. Petersham senior, although in extreme old age, had gone to his grouse-mountain in Scotland, in the hope that change of scene and a bracing air might bring his gout into subjection, as they had done on many previous autumns. The remedy, so often tried with success, at length failed; and my husband, in obedience to a summons from the North, left me in Hampshire and hastened to the bedside of his dying father.

Mr. Petersham senior died in December, and at his request was interred in the mausoleum of his Yorkshire seat, where Lady Caroline Petersham had been buried three or four years before. After the funeral my husband returned to Hampshire, but he was unable to spend many days with me. The affairs of the bank, and the various matters of business suddenly thrown upon him by his father's death, required him to visit various parts of the Continent without delay, and as his route was as uncertain as the duration of his absence, he proposed to make his journey alone, leaving me, when I was tired of Hampshire, to take up my residence once more with Mrs. Wilby, in my dear old home at Fulham, where he would join me as soon as possible, and remain with me till we should take up

our quarters in Grosvenor Square for the ensuing season.

As I had only recently been on the Continent (and foreign travel, a generation since, was by no means so luxurious an amusement as it is now), and as I was already anticipating much pleasure in the resumption of my old studious life at Fulham, I was by no means in a humor to demur to his proposal. Considerations of health, moreover, disinclined me to travel again just then. Mr. Petersham's plan, therefore, received a heartier approval from me than it possibly might have met if I had been only eighteen years of age and he five-and-twenty.

At the end of six weeks Mr. Petersham was with me at Fulham; and toward the end of February we came up to our town-house, which had been decorated and furnished afresh for my reception. Of course gayety formed no part of our immediate programme, my father-in-law's recent death being of itself a barrier to our entering into general society. We had other motives for quitting Fulham and fixing ourselves in Grosvenor Square. Mr. Petersham wished to be as near as possible to Lombard Street, the clubs, and the House of Commons; and I, with the nervousness of a young wife expecting soon to be a mother, wished to be near my physicians.

Mrs. Wilby, with her usual readiness to oblige me, left Fulham, and became my visitor in Grosvenor Square; and, surrounded by my ordinary means of amusement, as well as having an admirable library at my command, I was soon leading the same tranquil life I affected previous to my marriage. It was just as well that I could make myself happy without Mr. Petersham's society (although it was at all times agreeable to me), for ere the end of March he was again compelled to visit the Continent, and I was, for a second time during my brief period of wedded experience, called upon to play the part of a widow.

Mr. Petersham left me on the 21st of March, returning to me exactly at the expiration of twenty-eight days.

It is my intention now to relate certain occurrences which made his absence a memorable period of my existence.

Shortly after 11 o'clock A.M., on the 3d of April, a servant opened the door of the library, in my house in Grosvenor Square, and surprised me with the announcement that a lady had called, wishing to see me on particular business. As she had not offered a card to the porter, he had asked her what name she wished to be sent in to me; her reply to this question being that she did not wish to give her name to him, but desired only to have a personal interview with his mistress. On this, he, acting on his general directions, had replied that I was not at home, and that the lady had better call again. Instead of being repelled by this answer, the lady had said in a kind but decided manner, "I think you had better not refuse me admission without first letting Mrs. Petersham know that I wish to see her." She would be sorry if she learned that you had turned me from her door." The porter was so perplexed by the air of command with which the lady spoke that he admitted the stranger into one of the waiting-rooms, and then, before he was altogether aware of what he had done, went and consulted with the servant then speaking with

me, whose business it was to take messages into the library.

The man evidently expected reproof for the fault committed by the porter, as my orders had been given in explicit terms, that no stranger, declining to give his or her name and address, should ever be admitted into the house beyond the porter's table.

"Is she a lady?" I asked, the emphasis laid on the last word, showing that my inquiry referred to the station, and not merely the sex of the intruder.

"Oh yes, ma'am, quite a lady," was the confident answer. "*I saw her.*"

"Well, Johnson, if you saw her, and were satisfied," I answered, tickled by the self-complacency of the man, "perhaps I ought to admit her."

"I think she's a lady, ma'am," returned Johnson, lowering his tone.

Mrs. Wilby was sitting by the library fire, with a novel helping her slight deafness to make her unconscious of what was going forward. So I roused her and referred the matter to her decision.

"You're *sure* she's a lady?" inquired my aunt of Johnson, after with some difficulty (for her sense of hearing was very obtuse) having received my statement.

"Well—m'm—I, I—should *say* she was a lady," replied the man, all his confidence in his own judgment ebbing away under the repetition of the interrogatory.

"You may say I'm at home, and ask her into this room," I said, settling the difficulty for myself and for my aunt at the same time.

"I think you are unwise, Olive," observed my aunt, as soon as the door was closed on the servant's retreating steps.

"Possibly, aunt; but if it is some poor creature begging, I can give her what she wants, just for once, though it would not do for me to have my regulation set aside often."

I had scarcely uttered this sentence when the door opened again, and I saw approaching me timidly, from the most distant corner of the library, as lovely a girl as I have ever seen. Dressed in rich and well-made, but simple mourning (even as I and my aunt were), and with rich bands of golden hair folded under a plainly-trimmed bonnet, she was clearly a person to be treated with consideration. She looked as a delicate girl recovering from a slight indisposition might look—somewhat pale and subdued; but I had not time to criticise the separate elements of her beauty, when, slightly putting out her hands as she came nearer, she said, "I am much obliged to you, Mrs. Petersham, for admitting me. It was kind of you—a kindness not misplaced."

Ere Johnson closed the door I caught the eye of the worthy old man, and he responded to my look with a glance that said, "Well, ma'am, and *isn't* she a lady?"

"Do take that chair by the fire," I said, hospitably to my caller; adding, with a smile, "As I have not yet the pleasure of knowing your name, I can not introduce you to my aunt in the usual manner."

Ere the fair creature rested her slight figure on the seat to which I pointed, she bowed stiffly to my aunt, and then said in an imploring tone,

which fortunately was too low for Mrs. Wilby to be able to hear the words uttered, "Oh, let me see you alone! Do let us be alone! What I have to tell you I should not wish to say before third person. Do let us be alone!"

"Surely, if you wish it," I answered, with surprise. "Here, dear, follow me."

So saying, to the unspeakable astonishment of Mrs. Wilby, I led my mysterious caller out of the library into my painting-room.

"There," I said, stirring the fire, and causing the coals to crackle and to blaze cheerily, "we shall be by ourselves here. Now sit you down on the sofa."

I thought that she obeyed me with an effort, and a peculiar unsteadiness of expression in her deep violet eyes made me for an instant uneasy in her presence.

"Now for business? What is it? You must begin," I continued, with a slight laugh, intending to be reassuring.

"I *must*!" she gasped, turning white in a moment, and beginning to tremble.

I waited patiently for something to come of this "*must*."

"It is so hard. I do not know how to begin," she continued.

"Then I'll put you in a way to begin," was my reply. "First tell me your name."

The suggestion was very simple, but it made her start in her seat, and drew a flash from her large eyes that gave me a shudder.

"You are right, Mrs. Petersham," she answered, soon calming herself, and seeming to consider aloud—to herself rather than to me—"you should know my name first. But let me see—which name shall I give you? my own name, or the one I bore before I married? Yes, I'll give you that name. My name was Etty Tree."

"Ah, then, dear girl," I said, with a smile, "I know you. How is Julian Gower? Can I help him?"

A river of scarlet covered the poor girl, and she rose from her seat shaking in every limb. "What?" she said—holding down a shriek in a whisper—"you *do* know me then? You remember the name?"

"Yes, yes, I remember the name. But don't be alarmed!" I answered. "Has any ill befallen him? I will help him. I saw him years since in Northumberland for a short hour or two."

She answered me.

I have heard various epithets, more or less forcible, applied to human voices, expressive of pain, suffering, and alarm; but never have I heard or read a description of such a voice as that in which Etty Tree made her answer. It was a thin, harsh, thready voice, full of agony, and remorse, and bitterness. Though it was harsh and thin, it was still a whisper—such a whisper as a soul suffering the torture that never ends might crave a drop of water with.

"But I didn't marry him. I promised to love him, and to be his wife, and I broke my word. And perhaps I have broken his heart too. I was false to him. Despise me—hate me. Oh, why did you mention his name?"

"Let us be calm, my poor child," I said, adopting a maternal tone to her, though she was not much younger than myself; "you want to make an important communication—evidently a

painful one also—to me. Nerve yourself then, and be of good courage. Shall I ask you another question?"

"Yes."

"Who is your husband? Tell me your history. Whatever errors you may have committed, my breast shall have pity for you. Who is your husband?"

She looked at me with an unspeakable tenderness, and a fearful horror combined, as she answered my question with a movement of her lips. Not a sound issued from them. Never did the silence of lips that only moved, and nothing more, make a more hideous declaration.

"What?" I cried, starting in my turn.

She only nodded a support to the movement of her lips.

"Speak it again!" I exclaimed.

"I have said it."

"What?—my husband?"

"The man," she answered, steadily, in a low voice, "who calls himself your husband married me more than three years since, and he is the father of my child."

She said no more, but sat before me, with her delicate face turned to the ground, as though fearing to meet my eyes. As I looked at her I should have been grateful could I have persuaded myself that she was one of those wicked, abandoned girls who, I knew, abounded in London and every great city, to bring dishonor on my sex. But there was nothing to justify such a suspicion—nothing on which to ground *such a hope*. Grief, pain, humiliation were expressed in her face, but no trace of impious life. She had been misled by simple, childish vanity; by her own confession she had broken her plighted troth to as noble a young man as the British race had ever reared to fight against an adverse destiny. But truth sat upon her lips, and womanly virtue, in the narrow (but withal most sacred) sense of the word, was in every line of her countenance. Moreover, I now saw such a profound wretchedness settle, like an unhealthy blight, on her gentle features, that even in my vindictive agitation I was compelled to pity her.

"Oh, dear lady! would to God that my maternal duty did not compel me thus to pain you!" she said, at last putting a period to the silence which I could not trust my voice to break.

Her maternal duty! Had I too no maternal affections to consider?

"You *say* you know my husband," I at length answered. "You would have me believe evil of him. Tell me all you know. You talk of a marriage. Where did it take place?"

"I will tell you all," she replied, slowly, in a feeble, imploring tone. "Only do not look at me so sternly. I do not want him to recognize me, I do not threaten to disturb *you*. It is only justice to my child I ask. Do not judge me. God will do that. I have been very wicked, but my soul knows no stain why you should look at me so."

"Begin your story. I know something of you, for I have heard my husband and his dead mother speak of you and your sister. Begin at the time when you lived at Loughton in the cottage, close by the park, ere you broke (as you tell me) your vow to Julian Gower."

Satan had hold of me, and I could not speak less bitterly.

"It is my duty to obey you," she answered, meekly. And after a pause in which she gathered strength and composure, she told me the following story: "It was when I was living at Laughton that Mr. Petersham came and led me from my duty. He told me that he loved me, and he promised to make me his wife—the lady of Laughton Abbey and of all the wealth (and even more) that my family once possessed. I will say nothing in defense of my evil deed, for which God has punished and will punish me. I tried to be true to Julian Gower, but I could not. I knew that Mr. Petersham and you were engaged; but he made light of that, and told me he was ready to give up all your wealth for love of me. Oh, lady, how was I to believe that he did not really love me? All he asked of me was to marry him secretly and without delay. At last I consented, and I fled from Laughton, traveling up to London, as he desired me, and on the second day after I left the country he married me."

"Where?" I put in, sharply.

"At the church of St. Thomas, Kennington."

"Are you sure?—St. Thomas's, Kennington."

"Quite sure; for I wrote the name of the church down in my note-book on the day we were married."

"Go on."

"He told me that he selected that obscure church as one where we should run little risk of detection. He was very anxious that his father should never hear of our marriage; for, he said, the intelligence would kill the poor old man, so bent was he upon the marriage which would send down in one line the wealth of 'Petersham and Blake.' All he asked of me in return for the sacrifices he made was to consent to our marriage being kept secret till his father's death. The consequence of his father discovering our union would be his disinheritance and ruin. As I was so base as to obey him when he told me to desert Julian, of course I obeyed him too in this."

"You were married?" I said, recalling her, and striking the floor with my foot. "I want the facts."

"Immediately after we had been married and had signed our names in the register, I left England. Mr. Petersham put me into the carriage in which I was carried away from London. We parted at the church door, and I proceeded straight to Dover, with Major Watchit (perhaps you know him, he is now Sir George Watchit). My husband did not like to travel with me, for fear of being recognized on the road; so he confided me to the care of Major Watchit, and followed us to our destination."

"Where was that?"

"To Castellare—three or four hours' ride from Mentone, in the principality of Monaco. My husband had secured, in that secluded village, a retreat for me. Oh, it is a lovely land; and our cottage (surrounded by an orange grove, and bowered in a garden where the harebells blossomed in the middle of Christmas) commanded a view of a valley leading through one ridge of the mountains that wall the Bay of Genoa. We traveled over France, staying a few days in Paris, and when we reached Nice Mr. Petersham joined us, and took me to our home in the mountain village. There was no fear of our seclusion

being broken at Castellare. English travelers never came there. A few peasants, speaking a patois I could not to the last well understand, were my only friends and neighbors and servants, with the exception of Major Watchit and my husband and their men. It was a strange life for me, but I was happy when Mr. Petersham was with me. At least, I should have been happy if it had not been for the past. When I was alone I could not forget Tibby and Julian. They haunted me!"

"You were left alone, sometimes?"

"Oh, Mr. Petersham often left me. He could not help it. But Major Watchit protected me in his absence till the end of the second year after my marriage, and then I had my child for a companion. And soon after Major Watchit left for India, where Mr. Petersham's father had secured for him a high command, my husband, fearing that our retreat might be discovered, took me to Nice, and placed me and my child in the family of a physician—and since then I have only seen him once."

"Only once?"

"Ay—only once. He left me in the third year after my marriage, and did not return. I wrote to him, but he sent no answers to my letters. At first I thought the letters had miscarried; but when the delay continued, and I spoke to Dr. Brunod—the physician who had charge of me and baby—he only smiled, and said that my husband would return soon enough. It was all the answer I could get from him. I do not know why it was, but I feared Dr. Brunod. He was kind to me, but I dreaded him. In January my husband came to Nice, but he was—oh it made me mad! He is a fearful man! He never kissed me. He scarce shook hands with me. He wanted to take away my child, to be educated—to be educated (why it could only just say 'mamma')—to be educated! Oh it was too horrible! He wanted to rob me of my child. I spoke to him—but I can not say what I did say—but instead of touching his heart I only made him turn away, and, looking at Dr. Brunod, say, 'Poor thing, take care of her, doctor!' What did that pity mean?"

"Dr. Brunod spoke to him, and he went away, leaving me my child. Yes, he did leave me that. But I felt that further evil was intended for me. Dr. Brunod was very, very kind to me; but still I feared him more. He treated me like a friend, and showed me every respect: his house stood in the environs of Nice, and I was at liberty to walk in his garden and about the neighborhood; and whenever I liked I and my baby had a drive in a carriage. And so it went on till the beginning of last March, when among Dr. Brunod's letters I saw one in my husband's handwriting. It was among several others left on the table by the Doctor, who had quitted the room for an instant with Madame Brunod. I took up the letter and read it. It was very short, and ended, 'I shall be with you at the beginning of April, when I must have the child. The poor girl can not do better than remain under your kind care. My dear friend, I am sure, would wish it. But the child she may no longer have charge of. As a professional man, you know I am right.' I knew that if I waited there was no hope for me—that he would separate me from my child; that—oh

he is worse than I ever imagined bad men were! So I fled."

"But how did you contrive to get here from Nice without being apprehended on the road?"

She tossed her head, and gave me a melancholy smile of triumph—the saddest and most frightened smile that can be imagined—as she responded, speaking very quickly, and repeatedly in her haste running her words into each other. "I had no money, and no passport. What was I to do? Oh, Dr. Brunod had little fear of my escaping! There was no need to watch me! But I made one bold essay to save my child, and it succeeded! I used to walk in Dr. Brunod's garden with baby, nursing it in my own arms, and singing to it about England and home. I used sometimes to stray beyond the boundary of our inclosure, and walk on the public coach-road. One day I was so walking, when a magnificent equipage approached me. There were two carriages, with four horses in each, and servants behind. At a glance I saw they were English carriages and horses, and another glance assured me that the ladies in the first carriage were my countrywomen. Fortunately the horses were proceeding slowly, and the ladies were looking to me as I advanced holding out baby in my hands. The ladies gave a quick order to the servants, and in twenty seconds the carriage stopped, and I was speaking to its occupants.

"What do you want?" asked one of the ladies, kindly.

"You are an English lady and my countrywoman," I answered, "and you must help me. You *must* take me to England. I am an English wife and mother, kept here against my will. They want to separate me from my child. For dear Christ's sake, help me! Take me to our country, and I can find justice. If charity does not rescue me I am lost, for I have no money or passport, and if I had them I could not reach England without protection. Oh, do not hesitate, ladies! At this moment I may be watched!"

"There were three ladies in the carriage, and they spoke together in whispers. I heard them whisper among themselves, 'She is certainly a lady.' 'She is sweetly pretty, and the picture of distress and innocence.' 'It is strange, but cruelty is sometimes strange even in this world.' 'We can not do wrong in helping her.' 'She can have the vacant place with the children, and pass for the nurse we have left behind us.' 'Of course we must help her.' At last the chief lady of the three, the one who had first spoken, said, in a voice of welcome, 'Don't fear, my pretty countrywoman, that we will not grant your petition. Here, my dear girl, get in here at once. You can ride with us for the first stage, and then you can take your own place? You must consent to pass as our servant.' As she spoke the lady with her own hand turned the handle of the carriage-door nearest me. 'Oh God bless you! I am saved!' I said, and in another instant I, with baby in my arms, was the occupant of the fourth seat of the open carriage. As soon as the carriage was in motion I burst into tears, and the ladies were so delicate and discerning as to leave me to my sorrow—content with their own good deed, and not troubling me with words. As we drew near the end of the first stage I became composed, and, looking at the ladies, I saw, by their proud gentleness of face, that I could trust

them. 'Now at this town you will assume your new character,' said one of them, with a smile; 'what shall we call you?'—'Oh call me Etty—that is my name,' I answered. So they from that time called me Etty. On the second carriage coming up to us at the post-house, where we stopped to refresh ourselves and the horses (for the ladies were traveling slowly with their own servants and horses), the chief lady went to it and spoke to her children and maid-servants, who were in it or upon it, and gave directions that I and baby should be admitted into the carriage. They were lovely children, with blue eyes and fine flaxen curls, and I made them love me, during the short time I was with them, by singing to them and telling them fairy stories. 'You are a capital nurse,' the ladies said to me frequently. And so I traveled with them to Lyons, where a gentleman joined the party, who, on hearing my story from the ladies, offered to take me straight to England, as he had a passport made out for himself and wife and infant. And I accepted his offer and parted from my preservers. Oh they were so kind to me! They did not ask me one question as to my history all the time I was with them! Not one curious look or prying word did they give me; and when I took my leave of them with tears in my eyes, the chief lady gave me a purse containing twenty pieces of gold, and said, 'My dear girl, take this. You will want money on first reaching London, of which you say you know nothing. When you can conveniently do so, and really want the money no longer, take it to the Secretary of the Children's Hospital in Marchioness Street. It is an admirable institution, and has claims on the affections of every young mother.' And so I parted with them, and was taken to London. This is all. There is nothing more."

"It is enough!" I said, bitterly.

"Oh, it is more, far more than enough. Dear lady, I am so sorry for you," she answered, with a tone of deep commiseration, in the genuineness of which I was compelled to believe.

"Whatever wrong, and injustice, and cruel deception," I said, slowly, "you may have experienced from others, you have none to fear from me. I promise to investigate your statements—and if I find them true, there is no feeling of pride, or care for myself, or even of love for offspring yet unborn, that I will not sacrifice to do you justice. I promise this; and the God who watches over the actions of his creatures shall see that I am true to my word! My husband is abroad—"

"I told you so," she put in sharply. "He is on his way to Nice; or he is there now, marveling that I have fled."

"My husband is on the Continent," I said, beginning again, without noticing her interruption. "During his absence from home I will investigate the *facts* on which your perfectly incredible story rests. I will see you again, when I have made the first of those investigations. Where are you living? What is your address?"

"I am in lodgings," she answered, evasively.

"Where is your child?" I asked, putting what I deemed to be my former inquiry in another form.

She started as if with affright, and bit her lips, and clenched her hands, ere she answered, "That I *will* not tell you."

"I do not blame you," I answered. "You are right to distrust me. I distrust you. Until we see more clearly all the circumstances of our cases, we must necessarily distrust each other. But we must have intercourse. Will you make an appointment to be here this day week at the same hour at which you called this morning?"

"I will."

As she said this a pallor came over her slight face, and I saw that, the excitement of making her revelations being over, a reaction of the nervous system was in progress, and she was in danger of fainting.

I rang the bell instantly and ordered wine to be brought.

While the servant was obeying my orders she said, quickly, as if a necessity for precaution had just struck her—"He—Mr. Petersham—won't be here so soon?"

"I do not expect him," was my reply. "But should he return sooner than I anticipate, and be in the house when you call, you may rely on not being admitted, but receiving instead a note from me fixing a meeting elsewhere. The porter shall give you the note instead of admitting you. So let your mind be easy."

The wine came, and I mixed her a tumbler of strong wine-and-water and gave it to her with my own hands. She drank the beverage with avidity—showing by her manner a strong consciousness of her urgent need of a powerful stimulant. The remedy was efficacious, for the color returned to her complexion—or, rather I should say, the ghastly pallor left it, and rising, she herself placed the empty tumbler on the table.

"Oh, dear lady," she said again, as she had done several times before, avoiding the use of my title as a married woman, "you must regard me as an enemy; but be a generous enemy to me, and say you pity me. I have been a heartless, wayward, vain, false girl—but now I am steeped in wretchedness. Surely you pity me!"

I could not altogether resist this appeal, but all the more for that I nursed a vindictive scorn for the simple and unhappy creature that had such power over me.

Still full of bitterness I answered, "I pity you from the bottom of my heart. You are pitiable, if you have been wronged—and thrice pitiable if you are only trying to wrong others."

CHAPTER V.

ST. THOMAS'S, KENNINGTON.

It was incredible that Mr. Petersham had perpetrated such a crime as the girl charged him with! That he was the most vulgar and hateful of criminals, a *bigamist*, defeated in an attempt to confine his wife in a foreign town, to keep her under the surveillance of an agent (whose business in all probability was the care of insane persons), while he himself was studious to maintain in England that reputation for an observance of domestic decorum which in Great Britain is an affair of high importance to the man who would succeed in public life. I could not believe it! Why, the circumstances of the imputed crime made the accusation ridiculous!

How, in the first place, could he expect that a marriage duly solemnized in a London church, with his well-known name entered in a London register, could be a matter of secrecy? Supposing that in a moment of weakness and madness he had married the girl as she herself stated, and then, finding himself unable to sacrifice to his foolish love the possession of my wealth, he had married again hoping to keep her a secure prisoner in a foreign country—supposing all this, could I credit that he would have taken no surer precautions for the success of his scheme than those his victim (as she termed herself) enumerated?

Why, by her own story she had suffered no bodily restraint; and was allowed so much freedom that she was able to escape as easily as any English lady might drive from Hyde Park to Richmond Hill. A man of Mr. Petersham's rank, guilty of a crime the discovery of which would sink him in ignominy, would take surer means for its concealment.

And yet I found it difficult to suspect her of willful fabrication. No one could look in her face and not be impressed with a belief in her honesty. As I said before, I tried to think the worst of her, and was unable.

This was how I looked at the affair for the first ten minutes after Etty Tree had taken her departure (having previously left with me the date of her wedding). But then the horror of the thought, "*But what if it should be true?*" upset my self-possession; and I reflected on all the circumstances within my knowledge that in any way supported the statements of my husband's accuser. I knew that Mr. Petersham had seen her at Laughton more than once, and that he had taken considerable interest in her. *But that was through me.* In Northumberland I had met on my uncle's estate a splendidly handsome young man, Julian Gower, who told me, stranger as I was to him, the story of his love with such ingenuous candor and enthusiasm that he carried me for a few months quite away from common sense, and nothing suited me better than devising schemes for serving him. While this romance was at its height Mr. Petersham was arranging to take as an autumn residence, for himself and Lady Caroline, Laughton Abbey, the principal seat in the county in which (as Julian Gower had told me) Etty Tree lived. I communicated to Mr. Petersham and Lady Caroline all the circumstances of my interview with Julian Gower, and asked them, in case they hired the Abbey, to inquire in Laughton if there was in the neighborhood any young lady named Etty Tree, so surpassingly lovely as she had been represented to me. Of course I was well laughed at by Lady Caroline for my folly; and Mr. Petersham, who was a clever caricaturist with his pencil, drew on a sheet of paper a design for a grand allegorical picture of Youthful Courage rescuing Virgin Indiscretion from Darkness and Despair. Whenever I was a little absent in mind, Lady Caroline would laugh and say, "Ah, you are roaming over that wild moor again!" In due course my husband and his mother went to Laughton, and to their gratification found the girl, in whom I had interested them, keeping a small school, together with her sister, in the corner of Laughton Abbey park.

Mr. Petersham instantly wrote to me on the

subject, and by doing so revived an interest that had almost died a natural death. The steward of the Abbey estate was the young ladies' chief friend and patron, and told Mr. Petersham that they were members of a fallen county family. Indeed, Laughton Abbey and the splendid park their cottage windows looked upon still belonged to their kin. It also appeared that they had recently lost their grandfather, a much-respected clergyman, whose death had left them in very straitened circumstances. Several letters passed between me and Lady Caroline on the subject, the result of which was that we resolved to give the country schoolmistresses a chance of improving their worldly condition, and even of earning a modest fortune for "the beautiful Miss Ety" by the time her lover should return from America. Two or three years previous to the occurrences just mentioned, Mr. Reickart, one of the principal clerks in "Petersham and Blake's" bank in Lombard Street, had died under painful circumstances, leaving one little girl totally unprovided for. As Mr. Reickart had been a useful agent in the house, and had been for many years much respected by the partners, it was determined by Mr. Petersham and his father to give the orphan Amy Reickart a good education and a small provision that would place her above the risk of absolute want. At my suggestion this child was placed as a pupil in Miss Tree's school, my future husband generously offering to pay from his private purse an annual sum of £200 for her maintenance.

This arrangement, and the pleasure which it caused me for a few days, soon passed from my mind. Other interests rose to occupy my attention; and if I did not forget, I at least omitted to remember that Julian Gower, and Ety Tree, and Amy Reickart had ever moved across the drama of my cares. Laughton Abbey had only been hired for three years, and Mr. Petersham only visited it once after his mother's death, and then only for shooting. At one time Mr. Petersham senior had contemplated purchasing the estate, but the certainty that the town would be disfranchised at the passing of the coming Reform Bill caused him to relinquish the intention.

I therefore knew that Mr. Petersham had occupied a position toward the sisters that would give him a claim to their confidence.

Again, it was not to be supposed that Miss Ety Tree had no foundation for her astounding announcement. Mr. Petersham had spent many months in each of the two years preceding our marriage on the Continent; and, a circumstance that troubled me still more than the mere frequency of his foreign trips (which the business of the bank would account for satisfactorily), he had more than once visited the principality of Monaco to stay with his old friend and school-fellow Sir George Watchit. This I was aware of from his own communications. Sir George had a cottage at Castellare, where he lived in a studious retirement. The luxurious yet invigorating climate, and the magnificent scenery around Mentone, had made a lively impression on my husband, and he had more than once expressed a wish to take me there, as that I might share in the pleasure of some of his reminiscences. Startling as the intelligence was, it was within belief that Ety Tree had been there, a resident

in Sir George's cottage, at the same time as my husband. But that being granted, in what character had she been there? It was a source of much painful suspicion that my husband had never mentioned the girl in connection with his periods of residence in Castellare. Otherwise I had no reason to feel surprise at his never alluding to the pretty country girl, of whom he had been a benefactor. Indeed the brief episode of my interest in Julian Gower and the Laughton belle had been so completely wiped from my memory by the excitement of novel and engrossing experiences, that I was at no loss to account for my husband's having also lost sight of it.

Still if Ety Tree had been his daily companion at Castellare (and I could not persuade myself to disbelieve that much of her story), *why had he not mentioned the fact to me?*

And as I asked myself this question, the horror of the thought that the accusation might be true returned with increased force, and drove me almost beside myself.

Could little Amy Reickart tell me any thing? Was she still at Laughton? I had never paid the child any personal attention. Indeed I had never in all my life seen the luckless little orphan. I had only heard of her through my husband, who, in regretting the death of her father, had told me that he and Mr. Petersham senior had determined to take charge of her education, and give her (when she married or came of age) a fortune of £2000. Where was she? Was she still a pupil in the school at Laughton? Was the school still carried on by the elder Miss Tree? And then, what could that lady, if I found her, tell me of Ety's course? The poor girl had spoken of flying from her sister. Possibly her sister knew less of her madness than I.

And again the horror returned with increasing intensity; and an anticipation, which stirred my most tender affections, deeply as such an anticipation will ever stir a woman's nature, made me fall on my knees, and in an agony of dread offer a prayer to that everlasting Power, whose presence we never feel so sensibly as when the waters of trouble roll over us.

When I rose from my knees I was calmer, and I soon resolved to visit Laughton without delay.

But first I would ascertain if the register of the church of St. Thomas at Kennington contained any memorial of an event which I would not believe, and yet could not rest without disproving. Had I been only nineteen years of age, and married to a man of years near my own, whom I had chosen to be my husband from no considerations save those of love, I should of course indignantly and with an impulse of the heart have cast off any suggestions directed against his honor, without seeking in facts a justification of my decision. But in the simplest and least unpleasant sense of the term I was a woman of the world, accustomed to hear, see, and speak of facts that put an end to much of the ignorance of innocence. My husband also was a man of the world, honorable and humane (as I had enjoyed ample means of ascertaining), but still a man who, ere he married me, had lived to the age of forty years with gentlemen indulging in the pursuits and passions of fashionable society. I was unable then simply to say, "It is false," and to rest content.

The first step to be taken was the inspection of the register of St. Thomas's, Kennington.

Before proceeding to that locality, I deemed it requisite not only to order my carriage, but to have an interview with my coachman, for it struck me as far from improbable that he was ignorant of the exact locality of Kennington as I was myself. In this, however, I was wrong. The coachman knew Kennington Church well, and also the clerk's office where the church registers were kept. That ascertained, I ordered the man to bring the carriage without delay.

For a person jealous of her individual independence, Mrs. Wilby was a delightful companion. She never required a reason, or explanation, or excuse from me, however glaring might be the eccentricities of my behavior. As soon as my visitor had departed lunch was announced; whereupon I sent word to my aunt that, as I did not wish for any lunch, I trusted she would not keep the repast waiting for me. In the same off-hand manner I now sent her word that, as I was about to take a drive in the carriage, and desired to be alone, she would oblige me by taking her airing in the phaeton without me, if she desired carriage exercise.

At the expiration of half an hour I drove up to the gate of St. Thomas's Church by a route quite new to me; and when I looked on all sides as the carriage stopped I felt a reasonable confidence that, whatever might be the excitement caused in the neighborhood by my equipage, there was no danger of my being recognized in that quarter of the town.

The official who had custody of the register of marriages expressed his surprise at my appearance by staring at me with a gaze of stupid amazement.

"You want the register of marriages!" he said, laying an accent of incredulity on the first word of the sentence.

"Yes, my good man; I have told you so half a dozen times."

"Beg your pardon, madam, but I'm hard of hearing, and I thought my hearing must have been mistaken."

"Well, you understand me now. Can you let me look at the register here in the carriage, or shall I follow you into your office?"

"Look at the register in the carriage!" exclaimed the old man, elevating his chin, and putting his silver-rimmed spectacles closer to his eyes, so that he might have the best possible view of the woman who had presumed to make such an audacious proposal. "Look at the register in the carriage! Why, you mayn't do that. You must come into the vestry. But you must come at the proper time. The hours for searching the registers are from nine o'clock in the morning till half past twelve."

Interpreting this simple statement as a mode of asking for an additional fee, in consideration of the irregularity of my application to see the parish archives, I took from my purse a couple of sovereigns and offered them to him.

Instead of being mollified by my liberality, the unaccountable official burst out in a paroxysm of anger and fear combined. My generosity was so lavish that he took the proffered gold as a bribe to corrupt his honest purpose of holding the church papers in safe custody. "What,

love you, madam—you don't think I'm going to sell you the registers in broad daylight!"

He was such a stupid, staring, slow old man that I began to apprehend his sheer stupidity might cause me trouble of a more serious nature than two minutes' irritation.

Luckily old Johnson, my dear father's favorite servant, was in attendance (standing at the carriage-door in readiness to open it for me), and set matters straight. "Nonsense, old man" (Johnson was a young-looking man himself for seventy, and was accustomed to adopt a disparaging tone when speaking of old age), "the lady only wants to look at the register, and as the lady would like to come and search the book without a whole rabble of ordinary folks looking on, she is willing to give you two pounds for showing her the register out of regulation hours."

"Oh!" exclaimed the functionary, "that's all—that's all. Beg your pardon, madam; but I couldn't suppose all that as you didn't say it. *How* was I to suppose it, madam? Will madam be good enough to leave her carriage and walk into the church, and 'foler' me into the vestry? You see, madam, no disrespect was intended, but only duty—only faithful performance of duty to the parish, madam, and nothing more. I'll run and fetch the church keys, madam."

Diving into his little den of an office, the custodian of the St. Thomas's register was lost to my sight for half a minute, when he returned with an imposing cluster of bright keys in his hand.

In two more minutes I was seated in the vestry, with the registry of marriages before me.

I turned to the date given me by Etty Tree, and with a sharp flutter and a faintness at my heart looked for the entry I feared to find.

It was not there. Five marriages were included in the space allotted to marriages of that day, and I read them all carefully, the names of the principals, the officiating clergymen, and the witnesses; but no such names as Petersham and Tree were among them. I took the slip of paper from my purse, on which Miss Etty Tree in my presence had written down the date of her marriage and the name of the church in which she said it was solemnized. There was no doubt as to the signification of her handwriting. Every letter was legible, and the date on the slip was the same as that on the portion of the register before my eyes.

Possibly in her confusion of excitement, either at her wedding or in my painting-room, she had made a mistake of the day. As her marriage took place under circumstances especially calculated to disturb her, she might have been in error as to the exact day on which it was celebrated; or in her agitation caused by her interview with me two hours before, she might have written a wrong figure on the paper. To satisfy myself on this point I went carefully through the entries made in the book during the whole of the October in which, according to her statement, the marriage took place. In the same way I examined the registrations straight on till the end of the year. Then I went back to the day, and, starting on a retrograde course, I worked backward through the entries till I came to the beginning of the year.

The result of that much of my examination was satisfactory. No certificate of such a marriage was to be found.

I was on the point of rising and laying aside the book, when another thought struck me. Was it possible that the girl in her hurry had, in giving the date, placed a wrong number against the year? That question led to more fruitless labor, and I went patiently through all the entries from the date of Mr. Petersham's first residence at Langhton up to the time of my own marriage. While I was so engaged it became dark, and Johnson (having overcome the objections of the aged official) brought me a candle into the vestry so that I could carry my labors to a conclusion during that one visit to the church.

At length I closed the dingy pages of the register, and turned my head in expectation of finding the clerk close at my elbow. To my surprise I was alone in the vestry. I had fairly exhausted the patience of the faithful custodian of public documents, and also the endurance of my good old servant, who were both taking a nap on one of the church benches. Their sleep, however, was light, for the little noise I made in rising from my seat and moving across the brick floor of the vestry brought them to my side.

"Why, old man," I said to the clerk, with a smile, "you've been asleep; and while your eyes were closed I might have altered the register in any way I pleased."

The poor man looked so conscience-stricken and humiliated at this rebuke that I genuinely repented having indulged in such freedom of speech.

"Now," I said, "is this the only book of marriages you have in the church?"

Whatever question I put to this strange old man was the cause of new difficulty. Every simplest word I addressed to him had only the result of filling him with consternation at my ignorance of his business.

"Lor bless you, madam," he cried, in a shrill voice, "the only book—the *only* book! Why, I have six others. There are six other marriage registers."

"Then why didn't you show me them at first?" I asked, with considerable vexation, as I anticipated a weary prolongation of my toil, terminating with the discovery I did not wish to make.

"Because you didn't ask for them," was the sharp answer.

"Let me have them instantly," I replied.

"Oh, dear me, madam" (raising his hands and lowering his tone piteously), "do you want all of them?"

"Of course I do. Come, let me have them."

"All at the same time, madam?" (with an air of resignation.)

"Ay: Give me them all. I won't leave this place to-night till I have satisfied my curiosity."

Raising the ponderous lid of the fire-proof iron-chest in which the registers were kept the custodian proceeded to obey. "There, madam, there's the register beginning in 1600, and here's the 1650 one."

"Heaven protect my patience, man! I don't want these old books. I have already told you the date of the period I wish to search."

"Well, madam" (sorely perplexed), "and you have searched it."

"Then am I to understand that all the marriages that have been solemnized in this church between (let me see—what is the first date of the book?)—1810 and the present time are entered in this book which I have already examined?"

"Why, *of course*, madam, every marriage is there. How could it be possible for any marriage to escape being there?"

"Then the other six registers are old ones?"

"To be sure, madam. Of course they're old ones."

"Then I have no need to occupy your time any longer. Good-morning."

"*Good-morning*, madam!" (with a start and a scream of surprise)—"good-morning! Why, it's *night*, and the lamps is being lit in the street, and the shops is being shut up."

"Good-night, then. But I forgot. You have not taken your money yet. Here, I'll give you another sovereign for having kept you waiting so long. Here, take the three sovereigns."

"But, madam," returned the old man, softening toward my ignorance as he regarded the magnitude of the fee, "you haven't had a certificated copy of any thing. I can't take your money till I have done my work. What certificated copies would you wish me to make out?"

"Dear me, old gentleman," said Johnson, loftily, again coming to my relief, "what need have you to trouble your head about certificated copies? The lady offers you the money, and does not want you to do any more work. Surely you don't want to grumble at that bargain. Take the lady's money, and thank her."

"Oh, if that's all madam means—of course. But how could I have supposed it?"

Once more I was in my carriage.

"Where to, ma'am?" asked my faithful old footman.

"Home. But, Johnson, isn't he a terribly tiresome old man?"

"He's the most ignominious official I ever met, ma'am," responded Johnson, with magnificent disdain, as he packed up the steps and closed the door.

In another minute I was being whirled through the busy thoroughfares on my way back to Mayfair. The streets had in truth the ordinary aspect of London streets on a clear, dry, cold night in early spring, with shops brilliantly illuminated, with pavements thronged by foot-passengers, and with carriages and equestrians dashing past each other in the mid-road. But I found it difficult to persuade myself that they were not more than ordinarily crowded, and bright, and festive. The people on foot pursuing or passing each other in unbroken currents struck me as being all bent upon enjoyment. The carriages appeared to roll over the dry ground with unprecedented velocity, and with a rumble that was positively musical. My own horses seemed to fly. As I crossed over the river, and from the bridge surveyed the silent Thames, I did not think of its cold, deep silence, but the beauty of the light which, sent from factory and palace and street lamp, played upon its surface.

Any how the marriage had never taken place as stated. That surely was a cause for exultation. Why, it made my heart dance with triumph; and that anticipation of coming gladness already mentioned, becoming a living voice within me, cried—"Rejoice!"

And I *did* rejoice—that what had threatened to be my *calamity* would turn out to be only *another's sin!*

CHAPTER VI.

DOWN THE ROAD AND UP.

To sleep that night was out of the domain of the possible.

Early the next morning I rose unrefreshed from bed, and resolved to proceed without delay to Laughton. I could not see my way to making inquiries about Miss Etty Tree in that town, either by letter or by third person, without communicating the subject of my thoughts to others, or in some degree drawing attention to my own uncomfortable position. If I dispatched a messenger into the country to gather intelligence, I should have to make him my confidant, and in all probability he would impart my secret to others. If I wrote under an assumed name to the clergyman of Laughton, and he answered my letter, I knew I should be unable to rest satisfied with the information so obtained.

I determined, therefore, to be my own spy, and to visit Laughton with every justifiable care to conceal my name from its inhabitants.

At first I thought of traveling down into "the corn country" as a passenger of one of the stage-coaches. But I relinquished this plan for two considerations. It would any how expose me to the observation and curiosity of my fellow-travelers, among whom there might possibly be some one who knew me personally. And again, I felt that my husband would have good grounds for displeasure if he learned that his wife had made a long journey in a public conveyance. It was clearly best that, as I was bent on making the excursion, I should carry out my intention in such a manner as should violate none of the rules of society.

My course of action was soon laid out.

"My dear aunt," I said at breakfast to Mrs. Wilby, "I have occasion to go into the country on important business for two or three days. So do not be alarmed at my absence."

"Surely you are not going to Fulham?"

"No, not to Fulham."

"Where, then?"

"That question I can not answer at present. You must allow me to be a little mysterious."

"You would like me to accompany you, I suppose, as Mr. Petersham is not in Great Britain?"

"No, I thank you, dear aunt. I shall take no one with me but my maid. I shall travel in poor dear papa's traveling-carriage, which has no device on the panels, and is fortunately in town. I shall post, so I shall not need the attendance of any of our men."

Mrs. Wilby opened her eyes with astonishment. In my wayward girlhood I had caused them to open in that same way more than once.

"Remember, Olive," she said, mildly, after a pause, "you are a married woman now, and in whatever you do you should consider what your husband would approve. You will forgive me for venturing to remind you of that. Don't be 'mad Olive Blake,' now you are Mrs. Petersham."

This was about as decided a scolding as my dear aunt had ever given me, and I liked her for it. Her words were so just and appropriate, and withal they were said so mildly.

"Thank you, dear aunt, for your hint," I said, rising and giving her a kiss; "you not only are able to give good advice, but you have the happy art of giving it in an acceptable manner. I had, however, thought of my duty to my husband. This journey I am going to make is not a freak of wildness, but an affair of duty. The truth is, the young lady who called on me yesterday told me something which I feel bound to investigate. Never mind just now what that something is. My only reason for not asking you to accompany me is, that I am desirous of traveling faster than your strength would allow me if you were my traveling companion. Aunt Wilby, you can trust your niece, Olive?"

"Surely, my dear," returned the old lady, kindly, "now I hear you speak in that voice. God bless you, child; of course I can trust you. How long will you be gone?"

"I hope I shall not be absent more than two nights, or three nights at the utmost."

In another hour I was lying back in the traveling-carriage and studying the latest edition of Paterson's Road-Book as four post-horses bore me rapidly through one of the eastern suburbs of London on my way to "the corn country."

The journey before me required fifteen hours to be spent on the road. In this more fortunate generation it requires only three hours, passed in a luxurious car, flying at express speed, along iron lines. I divided the journey down to Laughton thus: I traveled twelve hours without stopping, save to change horses, the only refreshment I took during that time consisting of wine and biscuits, eaten in the carriage. Between 11 o'clock P.M. and midnight I drove up to the principal inn in a county town, within five short stages of Laughton. Having refreshed myself with sleep there, I was on the road again by 7 o'clock A.M.; so that while the clock on the antique town-hall was striking 10 A.M. I was passing up the High Street of Laughton, and in five minutes more turned in the rector's carriage-drive.

The unexpected appearance of my carriage before the Rev. Augustus Butterworth's house doubtless caused some excitement to its inmates. As I spoke to the servant who came out to inquire my business I glanced at the windows of the rectory, and saw at least seven human faces directed toward me. On asking if Mr. Butterworth was at home, and if I could see him, the man responded with a prompt "yes," opened the carriage-door for me so that I could descend, and then conducted me across a light and airy hall.

"Stay," I said to the man, remembering the seven curious faces, and feeling no inclination to find myself the centre of a family group, "as my business requires that I should see Mr. Butterworth alone, take me into the study—or some room where there are no ladies."

The immediate effect of this direction was that the servant turned to his right hand (whereas, before I spoke, he was inclining to his left), and introduced me to a dingy room, furnished for the most part with fowling-pieces, hunting-whips, many pairs of boots, and an old-fashioned bookshelf, stocked with sermons, eighteenth century

novels, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and some Treatises on Law—written expressly for country justices. Clearly the library was not the strong point of the rectory.

The Rev. Augustus Butterworth was soon with me, apologizing for his servant's stupidity in showing me into the library instead of the drawing-room. Mr. Butterworth was far advanced in middle age, and was a gentleman, but pompous and fussy, as gentlemen who lead a country life frequently are.

"Thank you, Mr. Butterworth," I replied to his opening apology, "do not blame your servant, for I myself took the liberty of asking him to show me into a room where I could see you alone without disturbing your family. I have traveled from town to obtain some information which I think you, as rector of this parish, can give me at once."

"I shall be most happy to give any information in my power to any lady of my acquaintance."

These words, as far as mere construction went, were only a formal expression of politeness; but the accent laid on the "*of my acquaintance*," said as plainly as any sentence, "Before I can give you the information you require I must know your name."

Gentlemen who lead a country life are frequently very curious.

"If I were a man," I said, taking firm hold of his lance, instead of merely turning it aside, "you might reasonably say, 'Our interview must begin with a statement of who you are;' but a lady, who wishes to preserve an *incognito*, may reasonably expect to have her humor indulged. That you may not misconstrue my motives for maintaining a reserve to you, Mr. Butterworth, let me assure you that considerations of what is due to others, more than of what is most agreeable to myself, induce me to conceal my name."

Mr. Butterworth blushed.

Gentlemen who lead a country life usually blush when they receive a rebuff from a lady.

"I shall be happy, madam," he said, stiffly, "to give you any information which I can with propriety give to a stranger."

"The object of my inquiries is a young lady, named Tree—Annette Tree—who a few years—three or four years—since kept a school here. She has recently appeared in the circle of my own early experiences; and the welfare of those most dear to me requires that I should be correctly and minutely informed as to her history. Can you tell me in what esteem she was held while she resided in this town? what circumstances led to her leaving it? and in what manner she took her departure?"

Mr. Butterworth bowed, seated himself at his writing-desk, and taking out a sheet of foolscap paper wrote down my questions. He appeared to regard himself as acting in an official capacity, and treated me more as if I were a witness under cross-examination than as if he were being examined by me.

"You have, madam, asked me three questions," he then said, "relative to a young person, whose brief and sad career in this town is only too well known to every inhabitant of this neighborhood. Question No. 1. In what esteem was the young person named Etty (short for An-

nette) Tree held during her residence in Laughton? Question No. 2. What were the circumstances that led to her leaving Laughton? Question No. 3. In what manner did she leave Laughton? To answer these questions it is necessary that I should speak freely to you (a stranger to me) of the character of a person who doubtless would not fail to use every possible means in her power to be revenged on those speaking the truth of her. I might, therefore, from prudential motives, reasonably decline to reply to your interrogatories; but it so happens that I can readily conceive it to be my duty to act otherwise. The young person in question, namely, Etty (short for Annette) Tree, is such a character that I can well understand individuals of her own sex may need to be put on their guard against her. I will therefore answer your questions fully; but as I do so I will make an abstract of my replies on this sheet of paper, and you shall append a statement to such abstract, testifying that it is an accurate condensation of my verbal communications to you. To such statement I shall not require your signature. Your handwriting will be sufficient."

I have more than once observed that gentlemen who have lived long in the country are very fond of drawing up statements of occurrences.

"Question No. 1," continued the Rev. Augustus Butterworth, taking a pinch of snuff out of a gold snuff-box, "In what esteem was the young person named Etty (short for Annette) Tree held during her residence in Laughton? *Answer.* In the highest possible esteem. She was singularly fortunate in her personal endowments. Indeed in a higher rank of life her beauty would have advanced her to the highest eminence of social distinction. My son, Captain Mervin Butterworth, of the Royal Artillery, did not hesitate to call her 'one of the most beautiful girls he had ever danced with.' My sister, Miss Argentine Butterworth, was not less struck with her personal attractions, and was so misled by them as to form a high opinion of her disposition and moral qualities. Indeed I and my family gave the young person and her sister that countenance (on their first opening a school in the Abbey Cottage) without which new-comers would in vain hope to succeed in Laughton. My countenance won for the orphan sister the cordial aid of Mr. Rufus Choate of this town (an intelligent and much respected apothecary), and also that of Mr. Gurley, an attorney of this town, and also a highly respectable man. The representations made by my sister Argentine to the late Lady Caroline Petersham (who then resided at Laughton Abbey, with her son, the well-known capitalist, and my very good friend, Mr. Arthur Petersham) induced that lady also to countenance the Miss Trees, and ultimately led Mr. Arthur Petersham to place his ward (a little girl named Amy Reickart) in their school. Not content with these exertions on behalf of the young people, my sister Argentine procured them the daughters of several of our county neighbors as pupils, and so advanced their interests that they were able to heighten their terms, and obtain a flourishing school. If they had only had moral character, they might have achieved not only competence but affluence in this town; for had they continued to appear to deserve it, I and my sister Argentine would never have withdrawn

our countenance from them. You may therefore see that the young person was held in high esteem during her residence here, when I tell you that she succeeded in concealing her true character from myself and my sister Argentine up to the very time of her scandalous departure. This is my answer to Question No. 1; and I will write down the substance of it before I proceed to answer Question No. 2."

After using his pen for about ten minutes, Mr. Butterworth was satisfied with the completeness of his abstract, and continued, "Question No. 2. What circumstances led the young person to leave Laughton? In the first place, my answer is (briefly), that the circumstances were infamous. In the second place, I will endeavor, without shocking your feelings, to detail what they were. As I have already stated, the late Lady Caroline Petersham was induced by my sister, Miss Argentine Butterworth, to offer the young person and her sister considerable attention. Like my sister, Lady Caroline was led away by her natural amiability. Her ladyship's conduct was indiscreet, but it was certainly kind. She had the two young persons frequently to the Abbey when there were no visitors who could be pained by being brought into familiar intercourse with young women of their humble condition. The consequences of Lady Caroline's goodness were most painful. Perhaps the young person's vanity, tickled by the flattering attention paid her, imagined that her beauty could win for her a matrimonial alliance with the aristocracy. I am willing to believe that her guilt had its origin in that foolish notion, and in no more hideous source. A constant visitor at the Abbey during the residence there of Lady Caroline and her son was Sir George Watchit, K.B.—then Major Watchit—the officer who only the other day preserved an important section of our Indian empire. An energetic and highly accomplished, but singularly taciturn man, Major Watchit (for it will be better to speak of him by the rank and title he then held) had all the virtues and faults of a gallant soldier. Highly honorable in all other respects, Major Watchit showed by his conduct that his notions of right and wrong in all that related to the gentler sex were of the laxest morality. I am loth to speak with disrespect of so splendid and brave a commander—the more so as I shot with him several times in two following years, and found him a consummate sportsman—but still I am compelled to admit that on one subject his life is reprehensible in the extreme. He did not hesitate to make an easy triumph of the foolish girl who had been thrown across his path. Possessed of many accomplishments, he was a good musician, playing several instruments with great and powerful effect—among others, the organ. Of the several benefits I conferred on the young person and her sister, the post of organist in my church was one. The ratepayers at my direction raised the salary of their organist from £25 per annum to £30 per annum, and I gave the post to the young person's eldest sister, the young person herself being permitted to assist her sister in the discharge of the duties. It was the young person's custom to practice the organ almost every evening during the summer and autumn months. Having by my permission the unrestricted use of a key of the church, she used to enter the

church by herself, and play on the organ, alone, for hours together. After her scandalous departure I found that Major Watchit had, during the preceding five or six weeks, been accustomed to meet her clandestinely in the church, and instruct her in the art of managing that solemn instrument by the judicious use of which we add so greatly to the sublime effect of our church services. As this, madam, is my answer to Question No. 2, I will, with your permission, pause and make another abstract."

On the completion of the second abstract Mr. Butterworth again cleared his voice and resumed, "Question No. 3. In what manner did the young person leave Laughton? The young person, madam, left Laughton by night, secretly, in a carriage drawn by four post-horses, with Major Watchit, who immediately took her abroad. The last I heard of her was that she was in the south of Europe, living with Major Watchit as (you'll excuse the word) his 'mistress.' What became of her when that gentleman returned to India I do not know. Of her present life I am altogether ignorant. I should add, as Mr. Petersham's name has been introduced several times into my answers, that nothing could exceed the surprise, consternation, grief, and anger of that gentleman, when he was informed of Major Watchit's unjustifiable conduct. He called on me during the early part of the day after the major's clandestine departure with—with—the young person. And in the following autumn, when he came to the Abbey, and staid three nights before going on the Continent, his mortification at his old school-fellow's flagrant indiscretion was by no means lessened. A gentleman of the highest honor, an unassuming Christian, and a staunch supporter of our ancient institutions, Mr. Arthur Petersham was greatly and genuinely affected. Indeed, to his sorrow at the painful occurrence may be attributed his declining to purchase the Abbey estate, when the descendants of the family of the Clares sold it some two years since. This is all I have to say, madam; I will therefore draw up another abstract, and then having read over to you all the notes of my entire statement, ask for the certificate of your handwriting."

Another quarter of an hour was thus consumed; but at the expiration of that time the pompous, prosy gentleman finished reading his abstracts, and I wrote beneath them: "The foregoing abstract of statements made by the Rev. Augustus Butterworth to me on this — day of — is minute and truthful.—*The Unknown Lady.*"

"By-the-by," said I, remembering a point of some importance when these formalities had been brought to a conclusion, "what has become of the elder sister? Does she still keep the school?"

"Miss Tabitha Tree left," answered the rector, "this town by the night-mail, almost immediately (let us say, with the interval of two or three days) after her sister's departure. She went to London, but what has become of her I can not say. She was altogether an inferior person to her sister, being small, and of homely appearance. Whether she is morally superior to her abandoned sister I can not say, but I have no very high opinion of her. My sister Argen-

tine thinks her 'sly,' and I should not wonder if that is the case. I understand that she has written, since her departure, to her particular friend, Mrs. Gurley (the wife of our principal attorney, whom I have already mentioned), and she says that she is in comfort, as far as her worldly circumstances are concerned; but as to the means from which that comfort is derived I can not even offer a suggestion. Possibly she participates in some way in the fruits of her sister's misconduct. Sir George Watchit is (I believe) rich, and would probably be inclined to act generously to the young woman's sister. But of that I know nothing. A most suspicious fact, however, is, that since her departure Miss Tabitha Tree has never drawn a single penny from a considerable sum of money lying in her name at our bank."

"Perhaps it would be as well for me to see Mr. Gurley before leaving the town?" I suggested.

"Well, you can please yourself, madam, about that," replied the rector, smiling humorously, as though he wished to imply that Mr. Gurley was the strangest, and most unaccountable, and most ludicrous parishioner imaginable, "but I don't think Gurley will help you much. He is a very worthy and honorable man, but a fussy man—good-natured and well-meaning, but still—Well, if you go to Gurley, you may be sure of a civil reception, but you must make up your mind to be bored a little. The fact is, Gurley likes to make a great deal of fuss about matters of very small importance."

"Then as I have no need to trouble you further, Mr. Butterworth," I said, "I'll bid you good-morning, with many thanks for the attention you have paid me."

"I should advise you," returned the rector, shaking the hand I offered him, "if you want further information to go straight to Mr. Peter-sham himself. He is an excellent man, and would, I am sure, receive with courtesy any lady of condition and bearing."

I did not stop to ask Mr. Butterworth what he understood by "a lady of condition and bearing," and was moving away, when he called me back, and said, "I think though, before you leave, it would be a wiser and more prudent course, if you permitted me to append to my abstract a curt summary of the additional and supplemental conversation that has just passed between us."

There being no course open to me but submission, I of course resumed my seat, and did not take my departure till I had heard the summary of the additional and supplemental conversation read, and had testified to its correctness by my handwriting.

At length I regained my carriage, and having directed that I should be taken to the principal inn of the town, I there obtained fresh horses. After driving through the Abbey park, and inspecting the exterior of the mansion and the cottage, in which I had a painful interest, I proceeded forthwith upon my journey up to town.

On Mr. Gurley I did not call; for I judged that he could tell me nothing it was important for me to know. Relieved of certain additions, due to the insolence and droll arrogance of his nature, the communications of Mr. Butterworth were quite reliable, and altogether sufficient for my purpose. I had learned from him—the rec-

tor of the parish, and a man highly respected (as I *knew*) in the neighborhood—that Etty Tree was as abandoned and shameless as she was beautiful. What her object was in forcing herself into my house with an impudent lie (now proved to be "a lie" by my reference to the registers of St. Thomas's, Kennington, and by the result of my journey to Laughton) I could not say, and did not care to inquire.

My husband's reason for never alluding to the wretched girl was also clear. Her history was to him a subject of acute pain—because I, his wife, had taken a passing fit of poetic interest in her fortunes; and because she had been undone (at least, as far as her gravest sin was concerned) by his old school-fellow and friend—whom he dearly loved, and I had been taught to think of with respect. While I seemed to have forgotten the poor girl's existence, it was only natural that he should avoid recalling a subject fraught with sorrow to my mind.

That night I slept at the same inn as I staid at on my downward journey; and the next night, shortly before 12 o'clock P.M., utterly prostrated with excitement and fatigue, I was lifted from my carriage in Grosvenor Square, and was welcomed into my own house with a kiss and an embrace from dear Aunt Wilby.

CHAPTER VII.

THE APPOINTMENT.

THE week came round, and on the appointed day Etty Tree presented herself in Grosvenor Square. If I had not pledged my word to receive her, I should have directed the porter to deny her admission; but it appeared to me right to keep a promise—even to her.

I received her in the library. More pale, and delicate, and careworn (as if the intense excitement of reckless adventure were trying her nerves beyond their capability of endurance), but even lovelier to look upon than at our first interview, she entered the room with the same light step and winning timidity of address. This time, however, she did not come close up to me. As on the former occasion, she extended both her hands slightly as she approached; but when I rose, and, drawing myself to my full height, fixed my gaze upon her with searching scrutiny, she knew that her place was to be at a distance from me. My look forbade her to advance, and she stopped still, where a copy of the *Venus of Milo*, in marble of dazzling whiteness, looked down upon her. As my vision rested on the form of the eloquent stone and the fair outline of the girl's soft face, the thought crossed me whether the beauty (dead in the silence covering thousands of generations) which had warned the sculptor's breast gave power for ill to one as wicked as the fair creature before me.

She answered my steady gaze—not with a glow of shame, nor with a flash of defiance, nor even with the discomfort of abashment, but with a look of innocent surprise. Perhaps there was trouble in her face, but surely not one sign of guilt. Could nothing, I asked myself, dash her serene hypocrisy?

"I have been to the church," I said, expecting that that would touch her.

"Well?" she answered, quietly.

"I have inspected the register," I continued.

"Well?" she replied again, adding, however, as I remained silent, "you might as well have believed me."

There was no change of color in her calm face as she said this, and she stood unshaken.

I thought I would touch another string.

"Since you were here I have made a journey down to Laughton."

She did start then, and a pang shot through her; but she only said, "What! to see my sister? I could not dare to see her now."

"If you went there you would not find her. The cottage has no tenant."

"What!" she exclaimed with a scream, starting as a patient does under an electric shock, "is she dead?"

Was she then so wicked?—and did she still care for her sister?

"And what if she be, girl?" I answered, pouring upon her all the pent-up forces of my scorn, and loathing, and hate. "What if she be? She were better dead than living to see you in your shame, perjured to your own true love—*perjured*, I say, to Julian Gower—and cast off as the vile thing you are by your seducer. I wish, in mercy to her not less than in anger to yourself, I could add one grain's weight to the consciousness of crime and degradation that must lurk under your pretty form, by being able to tell you she were dead. But I did not hear that. All I learned was that soon after your midnight flight with my husband's friend—to whom you sold your beauty for gold—she too fled. Some perhaps say she fled for shame, powerless to endure the ignominy brought upon her by your sin. Others say she only left Laughton in order that she might share in the golden fruits of your degradation. That cry of yours I believe, though it is almost the only true utterance that has come to me from your lips. *You don't* know where your sister hides her head, dishonored by your inexpiable guilt. Imagine her then in some wretched lurking den of poverty—and know that it is the home to which you have brought her. What! I *have* touched you now? You bore my gaze unmoved when I told you I had seen the register which gave the lie to your fabrication. You were disturbed only for an instant when I told you of my journey to Laughton, where your infamy and Major Watchit's triumph are the jest and gossip of village profligates. But now you *are stirred* at the thought of your sister. Think of her, then. Think, too, of Julian Gower. Remember him as he was when he lavished his royal love on your miserable vileness, and then think of him as he is now, heart-broken in a pestilential climate. Recall your hopes when you were an innocent girl, walking in the old garden round your happy home—your visions of coming joy, when you should be his one companion, his solace and his pride. Recall, I say, the future that then lay before you, and compare it with the days fast coming upon you—the days that, distant as they may be, haunt you now, as they will forever haunt you, though you dare not look at them."

I stopped, not because I had exhausted my bitterness, but rather because I was faint from agitation.

Then she approached me. I still looked at

her—proudly and forbiddingly as ever; but my eye had lost its charm over her. Nearer she came, till she was quite close to me. Then she regarded me. She was taller than I, and as she gazed down upon me I was forced, despite my will, to look up at her; and as I did so I saw in her violet eyes true tears of tenderness, such as good women shed for those they love.

"Oh, poor lady," she said, in clear silver notes, "from the bottom of my heart I pity you. Last time when I was here I asked you to pity me. It is now my turn to pity. I have been a wicked, vain, heartless girl; but indeed you wrong me; and in His own time God will prove me innocent of what you lay to my charge."

She said no more, but turning away left me. As she departed my eyes, instead of following her, fell to the ground; and when I raised them again they met only the cold statue.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY HUSBAND'S RETURN.

EIGHT days intervened between my second interview with Etty Tree and the return of my husband—eight days passed by me in fever of body and in mental restlessness. My physician called my malady a nervous fever. 'Tis the name always given by doctors to a great lady's indisposition, when they know neither its cause nor its proper treatment.

When Mr. Petersham returned he too seemed worn and harassed; but he professed himself glad to be at home again. The pallor and unusual delicacy of my face (though I had used every art of the toilet to obliterate all traces of illness) struck him, immediately he entered the room (where I lay on a sofa) and put an end to our temporary separation. He inquired the cause of my altered looks; and as he did so, I thought his scrutinizing eyes were unusually keen and significant, but that might have been nothing more than a ground-fancy of my excited mind.

"S—something b—has gone wrong with you, Olive. W—what is it?" The voice in which he said this was very soft and winning. "Come, tell me. Though it be bad news, and I am but just back from a journey of much grief and no profit, let me know all."

"A fortnight since I was cruelly disturbed, Arthur, by a girl named Etty Tree, the girl we tried to help years since. She has been here, and I have seen her twice."

He started, as he well might; and when he first spoke he stammered considerably—but then a slight hesitation at the commencement of each of his sentences was a natural defect with him. He was shocked by my announcement, but only on my account.

"M—my p—poor Olive," he said, battling with his vocal impediment, "you have indeed good reason to look pale. How she must have alarmed you! Who was with you?"

"No one besides the girl. I saw her twice."

"B—by H—Heavens, how fearful!" exclaimed my husband. "Imagine it, you to hear that poor mad girl's story, and to be with her—with-out a protector! Was it not a fearful spectacle, that matchless beauty clothing a shattered mind?"

Why, Olive, I have wept over it, hard man as I am. Did it not well-nigh kill you?"

"I did not know she was mad. She was so collected, and calm, and in every respect so like a sane person, that—that—"

"T—that y—you believed her story? S—surely n—not, Olive?"

"No—no!" I exclaimed, earnestly protesting against the accusation of distrust implied by his questions. "I did not put faith in her statements, but they haunted me so that I could not forbear from journeying down to Laughton to make inquiries about her. Are you displeased with me for that?"

"D—displeased, O—Olive?" he answered, cordially. "I am heartily glad you did so. It was the proper step for my wife to take. Why should I be angry with you for taking it?"

"I did not discern that her intellects were disordered, I only thought her very wicked. Her statements were so surpassingly terrible!"

"Y—you n—need not repeat them, my dear," said my husband, regaining all his composure, "I—I kn—know them well. Poor thing! her history is the most cruel story of crime and fast-pursuing punishment that any romancist could invent. I have no need to go over each of the ghastly facts to you, as you have learned them for yourself. I will only touch on such points as are necessary for you in order to understand my relations with her, and to perceive the principal features of her remarkable hallucination. W—when W—Watchit (with that sad want of principle which has throughout life been his characteristic on one subject, but, in justice as well as friendship to him, I am bound to add, *on that one subject only*) carried her away from Laughton, my surprise, and indignation, and sorrow were such that they threw me upon a bed of sickness. Watchit took the girl with him to a mountain village in Monaco, to his cottage in Castellare, that you have often heard me speak about, and from that spot wrote to me, inviting me to join him. Incensed as I was with my old school friend I accepted the invitation promptly—for the sake of his victim, not for the pleasure of his society. At great inconvenience I went to Castellare and found them glad to see me. I had for your sake, Olive, always shown the poor girl much kindness, and she had conceived for me just that attachment which a young creature in her rank of life might be expected to form for a considerate patron. W—Watchit t—told me that she had greatly dreaded my arrival at Castellare, fearing that I should scold her for her misbehavior. When, then, instead of upbraiding her, I greeted her with my old manner of consideration, she was very grateful. At Castellare, on my first visit, I found—what I had feared was the case—that she and Watchit were not married. Our old friendship entitled me to speak to him freely on this subject; and I told him that it was his duty to make the girl his wife forthwith. I reminded him that she was a girl of gentle descent, the daughter of an officer of the British army, and, until he had met her in my mother's drawing-room, a young lady of spotless reputation. I even ventured to say that the interest which my future wife had condescended to take in her was one consideration that ought to have exempted her from the advances of his libertinism. These representations

were taken in good part by my old friend. H—he a—acknowledged their force, and said that he had always intended to marry the girl. He had even proposed to her before leaving England that they should be married in the church of St. Thomas's, Kennington; but he had relinquished that plan, from a fear that the ceremony solemnized in any church, however obscure, might become known to certain affluent relations from whom he had expectations. I urged upon him to be married there in Monaco, by a priest of the Romish Church, rather than to continue his existing intercourse. The poor girl knew how I interested myself in her behalf, and the knowledge of course strengthened her grateful feeling toward me.

"M—my f—f—first visit at Castellare, however, terminated without the ceremony having been performed. Still I did not despair to carry my point. That Watchit might remain longer within the range of my influence, I exerted myself with my father and his brother Directors of the East India Company to procure him an extension of his furlough; and when he had been in Italy eight or nine months I saw him again. He was then expecting the birth of a child—a fact which gave additional force to my renewed exhortations to him to marry. She, poor girl, was much altered. Cut off from all communication with her sister, suffering under the burden of guilt which weighed on her conscience, she had become subject to fits of obstinate depression. Unhappy creature—she had enough to make herself. And possibly, among graver causes for wretchedness, the discovery that Watchit was a comparatively poor man (instead of the very rich one she had supposed) was not without a melancholy effect. My presence, however, brightened her up. I brought her out with me as a present a large box of English books; and the delight with which she received this gift was literally extravagant. I again urged on Watchit the propriety of marriage; and as another inducement for him to take the step, I made him a promise that I would secure for him a certain command in India (which would, in all probability, be vacant in the course of another year) if he would accede to my request. I had, however, again to leave without the fulfillment of my wishes.

"S—six m—months passed, and Watchit was in cruel trouble. He was a father: but the mother of his child, after weeks of extreme suffering and peril, had manifested unmistakable symptoms of a disordered intellect. Besides the obstinate mental dejection with which young mothers are occasionally afflicted, she was the victim of a most unaccountable—and most painful—hallucination. She was firmly convinced that I was the father of her child, that I was also her husband, and that Major Watchit had himself been the witness of our marriage. On receiving this intelligence I immediately hastened out to Monaco, once more to give consolation and advice. Poor Watchit—a singularly reserved and self-contained man, but withal one of tender sensibilities—was utterly unmanned. It seemed to me that his mind would follow that of the poor girl's. No marriage had taken place, and none could take place between my friend and a poor demented creature who was firmly convinced she had a husband living.

"I-I c-could do little for her. It was to my wretched friend that my best and first thoughts were given. It was necessary for me to do something to rouse him from the stupor of despondence into which he had fallen. Fortunately the command in India (already spoken of) fell vacant, and I procured it for him. Spirited persuasion induced him to accept his promotion; and I sent him off to the East—where he has distinguished himself so splendidly. But ere he left, I promised to take a paternal care of the poor girl and her child. In discharge of this undertaking I moved her to Nice, and placed her under the surveillance of a humane and most enlightened physician, Dr. Brunod. The doctor was not a rich man, so I went to the expense of fitting him up a house in the environs of Nice. The journey I have just returned from was taken in order that I might see her, and also place her child in proper hands, with a view to its education. It of course would not be fit that she, suffering under such a delusion, should have the custody of her child, now that its intelligence is becoming active. Well, Olive, on my arrival at Nice, what was my surprise to find that the girl had made her escape from Dr. Brunod's gentle hands! I forthwith instituted search and pursuit after her; but not a trace of her movements had I discovered when I entered this room an hour since."

Such was the intelligible but heart-stirring narrative of my husband. Such was the explanation of my terrible mystery.

"Oh, Arthur," I said to my husband, "how deeply I regret having used the language of bitterness and scorn to her!"

With these words I closed my minute account to him of all that had transpired, within the circle of my experiences, during his absence.

"D-don't w-worry your head about that," he answered, reassuring me with an air of great good-humor. "A-a b-better remedy, I dare say, could not have been devised for her. A knowledge of how those who do not possess the secret of her delusion must regard her will doubtless act as a wholesome medicine."

What a change had my husband's words effected! When he rose and went to dress for dinner he left me on the sofa the happiest and proudest wife in all London. I never before had felt so much like *really* loving him.

The bloom soon returned to my cheek, and the freshness to my spirits, and ere three days had passed over us I was able almost to laugh at my alarms of the previous three weeks.

On the third day after my husband's return, our old and very intimate friend, Sir Charles Norton, the well-known Secretary of State, dined with me and Mr. Petersham—no other visitor being present. Sir Charles was on such very confidential terms with us, that my husband in a very humorous manner told him the annoyance to which I had been placed—by the irruption of a mad woman, declaring that she was really Mrs. Petersham. Sir Charles was very much tickled with the narrative, and also with the notion of his friend's having two wives.

"Well," I said, concluding my part of the conversation on the subject, "I trust the poor creature won't trouble me again."

"No fear of that, my dear. She won't re-

peat her visit," said my husband; and as he said this, I noticed that he and Sir Charles exchanged glances.

CHAPTER IX.

MY SIN.

SHE was only a mad girl, and the annoyance she caused me was quickly forgotten; but the day was coming on black, fast wings when her words, so earnestly spoken, and at the time of their utterance so little heeded by me, were to re-form themselves, and strike to my heart. "Oh, poor lady," the mad girl had said, "from the bottom of my heart I pity you! Last time I was here I asked you to pity me. It is now my turn to pity. I have been a wicked, vain, heartless girl; but indeed you wrong me, and in His own time God will prove me innocent of what you lay to my charge."

Strange words these for a mad girl! But the insane know well how to cut a listener with pathetic speeches.

Why did I not go forth and seek her? drop comfort into her wretched heart? and find her the protection of such a home as a fraction of my wealth could procure? I knew her history well; that she had neither father nor mother; that she had no money to secure her the greedy care of expectant relatives; that she was separated from the sister who might have shielded her; that she had been betrayed by a brave soldier, who for all his gallantry was a selfish libertine; that for sins, into which she had been betrayed by childish vanity and a seducer's guile, she had paid the penalty of a shattered intellect; that, though her mind was broken, her beauty still remained to her for the wicked to mark as prey. I knew all this; and I remained quiet and cheerful, and nursing an anticipation of coming gladness—living in my proud mansion, refreshing my eyes with the works of painters and sculptors, courted by crowds of friends, and playing fastidiously with the labor, and thought, and genius of those who fed my tastes and gratified my caprices.

And pray, what was the mad girl to me that I should deviate from my pleasant paths to help her? She had been false to her first love; false to her sister; false to her sex. She had approached me, but uninvited; and she had come to me only to besmear my delicacy with the defilements of her wicked experiences and crazy brain. Surely the lunatic asylums could take care of their own without my interference! Why should I vex myself about such a creature? Why should I waste a thought upon her?

And yet I had given her many thoughts when I had never seen her; when her existence, known of only by the ear, was a fanciful ornament in my drawing-room visions of life's romance.

At length I had met her in the stern life of fact, and I put my hands down before me, and drew my skirts from hers, and passed on. I abstained from mentioning her name to my husband, for it was an *unpleasant subject*. And soon I never thought of her, because it was an *unpleasant subject*.

This was my sin!

Do any of my sisters think "sin" a hard name

for such neglect of the duties of Christian charity—a neglect justified, as the phrase goes, by social exigencies?

I will judge myself, so that I may not be judged

The mad girl came to me, hungry for woman's counsel, and I gave her the censure of an angry tongue; thirsting for pity, and I gave her scorn; a stranger to all human love, and I gave her hate; naked of her honor, and I did my utmost to tear from her any thin veil of self-respect

still left to her; sick to the core of her heart, and imprisoned in remorse—and *I forgot her.*

A slight sin! Why, it was a sin in which sin folded itself within sin, like the leaves of an unburst rose-bud. It was made up of sins innumerable. I did not see them then—the bud had not burst; but they were there, incased in a smooth, neat covering. And I know a book which says that they who have committed such sins, and die unrepenting, shall go away into punishment.

BOOK V.

SUBMISSION:—BEING THE THIRD OF MISS TABITHA TREE'S NOTE-BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

MARCHIONESS STREET.

It is a summer evening at the end of July, and I am sitting at one of the many large windows on the first floor of the Hospital for Sick Children in Marchioness Street, Bloomsbury, W.C. (as it is described in the Post-Office Directory for 1861), and I am looking into the dusky street.

In the times of Queen Anne, and George I., and George II., Marchioness Street was in great favor with the aristocracy, whose capacious and conspicuously decorated coaches, drawn by four or six horses, and heavily weighted with tawdry menials, were constantly rumbling over its uneven ground. It is a street of deserted mansions, of marble halls that have no gay visitors, of wide staircases no longer climbed by haughty nobles and scheming ministers of state, of lofty dining-rooms that have seen no banquet for many a day, of magnificent drawing-rooms whose ceilings, rich in costly moulding and antique ornament, long since looked down on proud patrician girls as they danced chacones, and cybells, and sarabands, and minuets, and contre-dances, and flirted their fans, to the admiration of patch-bearing gallants and high-born mohocks—wasting an hour in good, ere they enjoyed themselves in bad, society, and rushed wildly rioting through the town. The flash of lights and the brightness of burnished mirrors, the waving of white plumes and the rustling of choicest silks, the dazzle of diamonds and the joyous sweep or merry jig of dance-music, brilliant uniforms and ringing laughter—they've all left Marchioness Street for the far West! On the wettest and most miserable of winter nights, when no one but the night policeman is beating the pavements, Marchioness Street, however, is brighter now than it was in its days of splendor, after the aristocracy had put out their lights, and shut their street doors, and gone to rest. On either side of the street a row of gas-lamps runs from one end to the other, and as the way is straight as an arrow, all the lamps shed light on the belated wanderer's course. What a contrast to old times! Projecting from the rusty railings, or attached to iron-work, curving down from the door-posts, the awkward extinguishers

yet remain, in which the link-boys, who followed the then great folks' equipages, were accustomed to put out their torches.

Dingy and deserted as it is, garnished with cobwebs instead of muslin blinds as it is, and covered as to its wood-work with smuts of ages instead of paint as it is, Marchioness Street is still picturesque—indeed very much so by lamplight, when the once-white facings to the red-brick mansions look white as ever, and the cobwebs and smuts are less depressing than they are by daylight. The door-ways are many of them very imposing, their posts being elaborately carved, and at least half a dozen of them having porches, the roofs of which are supported on curved pillars, and are decorated with an excess of sculptured wood or stone—fat cherubs, smiling Cupids, exuberant clusters of grapes, lyres, flutes, music-books, and such other devices as great people used, once on a time, to pile upon their door-ways.

When the nobility gave up Marchioness Street it fared worse, and fell into the hands of the lawyers. Indeed, it stands in a district even yet called by old-fashioned people "the law neighborhood," in which the last of judges (to reside there) only the other day sold his mansion. It was a convenient locality for rich barristers and solicitors, for Gray's Inn is hard by, and Chancery Lane is near to Gray's Inn, and Lincoln's Inn and the Temples are near Chancery Lane. The lawyers lived in Marchioness Street, drinking their port and playing whist, till the houses got so perfectly out of repair that they needed re-roofing, and, in some cases, rebuilding; and then the gentlemen of the long robe left, as Julian Gower protests, without effecting the requisite restorations, or even paying their taxes; and Marchioness Street, all cracked, and dilapidated, and draughty, and unpainted, fell down another grade in social dignity.

It was seized on by Charitable Objects.

It is the peculiar home of Charitable Objects at the present moment.

The Hospital for Sick Children occupies two of the largest mansions, containing some seventy beds, each bed containing a child suffering much, though it can have only sinned a little. Next door, standing on ground once occupied by a mighty earl's house, stands another asylum for

the afflicted of our species. Then there are "homes," and "retreats," and "refuges" for all sorts of Charitable Objects.

It is Sunday evening, and the humbler folk going to and fro for devotion or pleasuring make the pavements lively. I count at least twelve persons in the street at one time. Usually there is almost no traffic in Marchioness Street; the carriages of a dozen physicians and those of the lady patronesses of the benevolent institutions being the only vehicles accustomed to the ways of good society that enter it. For the most part the friends of the Charitable Objects come to see them on foot. The square at the end of Marchioness Street (also full of deserted mansions, which, instead of being inhabited by Charitable Objects, has a population of lodgers and lodging-house keepers of the mouldiest description) is a *cul-de-sac*, and when a young cabman, ignorant of his profession, drives down the street, hoping to make a short cut, he has to go back without effecting his object. It is therefore very quiet in Marchioness Street.

Now that I am tired of the view out of the front windows of the Hospital for Sick Children I go round to the other side of the building, and survey the fine gardens at the backs of the deserted mansions—gardens full of magnificent trees, limes, and elms—the high red-brick walls covered with vines and fig-trees, all untrained and fruitless, but still very luxuriant, and fresh and green to look upon.

The nobility and the rich lawyers little thought how their spacious pleasure-grounds would be enjoyed by the Charitable Objects.

CHAPTER II.

HOW I CAME TO BE THERE.

THE evening just recalled is of the past—divided from me by many years and many changes.

I had left Loughton eight years, and was thirty-four years of age. How had life gone with me since then? Eight years is a long time. When one reads carelessly in the paper the words of a judge, "Prisoner, your sentence is that you undergo penal servitude for seven years," one finds it difficult to realize all the significance of the curt decision—to imagine what a different aspect life will bear to the criminal at the expiration of his punishment—how he will look beyond himself for friends whom death has removed, or prosperity has exalted, and look within himself for powers once delicate and highly trained, but now weakened or destroyed by long endurance and ignominious toil. Why, *one year* is a very long time—long enough to cover happy homes with desolation, and make men assume forgetfulness of faces they once kissed! Even a night has made men old; and I know where an idle speech, to utter which consumed only a *fraction of a minute*, broke to pieces the friendship of a life.

Eight years! The hair on my head was turning gray, and I often caught myself vainly endeavoring to recall names once familiar to me as household words.

Since leaving Loughton by the night-mail I had never revisited it. Twice a year I had written to dear Mr. and Mrs. Gurley, telling them I

was well, as happy as I had a right to be, and possessed of as much prosperity as I had any desire for. But I never let them know where I lived. They wrote to me from time to time in answer to my communications, but their epistles were directed to an address where they were kept for me till I called for them. In the course of eight years I changed my secret address twice. Mr. and Mrs. Gurley's letters were a great comfort to me, giving me such news from "the corn country" as they knew would be pleasant to me, although I fled from it in shame. Eight years made no alteration in those dear friends; they wrote to me as freely and confidently and tenderly as ever. Three times Mr. Gurley wrote to me of Julian Gower. Julian had returned from South America, not poor, as we had anticipated, but with modest affluence. The mines had turned out better than he had expected. On his arrival in England he went down to Loughton, and had an interview with Mr. Gurley, expressing a great desire to discover me and make provision for my comfort. Loyal to the confidence placed in him, Mr. Gurley concealed from him the fact of his correspondence with me, but wrote to me urging me to reconsider my decision never again to see the playmate of my childhood. To this counsel I responded with a firm reiteration of my resolve. Twice since then had Mr. Gurley mentioned Julian's affairs—once to tell me that he had been appointed engineer to a prosperous mining speculation in the North of England, and again to inform me that his old friend Mr. Peter McCabe had died in Newcastle, and left him a legacy of £10,000. These were the only occasions of Mr. Gurley's saying any thing about Julian; but I had further information as to his proceedings. A crisis had arisen for enterprising mechanics and self-taught engineers to make large fortunes. Railways were in course of construction in various parts of the kingdom; and Julian, whose capacity was known to the Stephensons, was employed to lay down more than one important line. He had therefore in a certain way become a public man, and every now and then I saw his name in the columns of the daily papers. Oh, poor, poor Etty, if she had but known the coming fortune of the man who loved her so well! But though that regretful reflection would persist in rising, it seemed to me unreasonable, and selfish, and wicked. Since she had proved herself unworthy of him, ought I not rather to rejoice that he was not closely united to her?

I had not heard of Etty. When I left Loughton I had a confidence that she would write to me as she promised, and I felt it more than probable that ere a year or so should elapse I should hear from her. But she never sent me either letter or message. For two years I made sure that a letter forwarded to me from Loughton would be waiting for me at my secret address the next time I presented myself at it, and asked "Have you any letter for me?" Nearly every month (for the first two years of my London life I could not go oftener) I had for eight years put this question to the agents who received my letters. Time after time my letter receivers (smiling sadly and grieving to wound me) had to answer, "No, ma'am, no letter for you;" and on the occasions when they did hand me a letter

from Mr. and Mrs. Gorley with a cheering "Yes, ma'am, there is a letter for you this time!" a glance at my eyes told them that it was not the letter of all letters which I required. Of course, I put the worst construction on Etty's silence.

But how had I managed to live in London for eight years? Without much difficulty. London has its terrors; but as a general rule it has an abundance of work for willing laborers.

For the first two years after leaving Laughton I was nursery-governess to Mrs. Monk, of Clapton. I often read in volumes of fiction that the governess is usually worse treated and worse paid than any other worker. I trust this is not the case; but if it be a fact, I have another reason for gratitude in having been led to Mrs. Monk's door. She was a devout and excellent lady—a kind mistress to me when I was her servant—and in after-years one of my very best friends.

An advertisement in a newspaper was the cause of my seeking admission to Mrs. Monk's service; and at the interview, when she engaged me, she told me the nature of my duties, and the terms she offered. The latter were liberal, for Mr. Monk was a rich man—rich even among London's rich merchants. It was when Mrs. Monk asked for my testimonials to character that the difficulty of our interview became apparent.

"I have no character, madam," I answered. "I have never before held a paid situation in any family. Since it was necessary for me to earn my living I have kept a school in the country until now."

"Can you, then," inquired the lady, "give me a reference to the parents of any of your old pupils?"

"No, I can not," I answered, with an effort.

"And why not?"

"Ten days since, Mrs. Monk, I had dozens of friends I could have referred you to, but I have fled from the place in which my name was respected—and in which, I give you my word, my character is still stainless in the estimation of those who know me. I have come to London to earn my living as a good woman may earn it. I wish to enter your service, but I can not, in order that I may do so, speak of the trouble from which I have fled; I can not even give you the means of learning for yourself the sorrow of my life. This I can assure you—there is nothing in my wretched history which, if you knew it, would decide you not to engage me as the instructor and attendant of your little children."

"That will do, Miss Tree," answered the lady. "You must come and live with me. Your character is written in your eyes, and I have read it by a heart that has known something of sorrow."

The good woman who thus spoke to me years since is in her grave now. Would that my gratitude could reach her in the place where her soul is at rest with God!

I remained for two years the chief superintendent of Mrs. Monk's nursery, exercising *surveillance* over the nurse-maids, and instructing the younger children. During the last six months of that period one of Mrs. Monk's children, a lovely boy of six summers, died after a painful illness, in which I nursed him. I only rendered the poor little fellow the services I was bound to

pay him, but the mother's heart, that "had known something of sorrow," led Mrs. Monk to put another estimate on my services, and when we returned from the side of the grave in which we had placed him we were no longer mere mistress and dependent, *but friends*.

Our common grief roused us from the unconscious selfishness in which the well-intentioned and amiable pass too much of their lives, and we began to sympathize, in a way we had never before done, with those thousands of poor mothers whose children, in the vast "city of the world," die, not as our darling had perished, sustained to the last with all the care of science, and means of wealth, as well as with affectionate solicitude—but die when timely nourishment and medical aid would have preserved them in health and beauty.

In some measure this sympathy roused in Mrs. Monk's breast was the seed from which *The Hospital for Sick Children* sprung. Any how, she was one of a few other benevolent persons who established the institution. It had an humble beginning. For four years it could scarcely hold its position in the smaller of the two mansions which it at present occupies; for benevolent undertakings, not less than commercial enterprises, when they take shape as householders have to pay rent and taxes, and at first subscribers were slow to give their support to the new charity. It was a work of great labor to give the mere existence of the hospital publicity beyond a very confined circle. Even at this date there are hundreds—ay, thousands of rich mothers—with-in an hour's drive of Marchioness Street, who have never heard of *The Hospital for Sick Children*. If any such rich mothers amuse an idle hour with these pages, I here beg them, when they are distributing a small fraction of their incomes in charity at the close of the year, not to forget "the poor child's home in illness." Have they children, struck with maladies the course of which they with a fearful effort of resignation leave God to determine? Let them, even as they implore mercy, show mercy to the wives of poor craftsmen whose babes are similarly afflicted! Have they infants fresh and blooming; with round limbs well-formed, and white, and tender; with faces full of coy, roguish smiles; and with pink lips roaring out an unintelligible jargon of delight? For such blessings let their deeds give thanks.

But still the question remains to be answered—How came I on that summer evening to be sitting at a window overlooking Marchioness Street?

It happened thus.

On the establishment of *The Hospital for Sick Children* I solicited Mrs. Monk to do her utmost to procure for me the post of matron. The objections offered by her to my undertaking the arduous and irksome duties of the situation I overruled. I managed to convince her that no employment held out to me more attractions. I should be effecting good, should be doing work that I was peculiarly qualified to do well, should have trust placed in me and the control over others, should, moreover, be able to maintain my intercourse with her. I represented that, at the first establishment of a hospital, it was especially necessary to keep down every expense (connected with the mere machinery of the af-

fair) at a minimum; and I felt confident the originators could not procure so good a chief-nurse as I for the wages I was ready to accept.

The result was, that in due course the Committee appointed me matron of the hospital, and one dull November afternoon Mrs. Monk drove me up from Clapton into town and left me in the desolate mansion of Marchioness Street, which continued to be my home for several years afterward.

At first, as I have already intimated, the hospital had a hard struggle for life. Mrs. Monk and her immediate coadjutors were comparatively rich, but they could not by themselves maintain the institution efficiently. At the end of our fourth year affairs looked so badly that the Committee were very near relinquishing their efforts, when Miss Grace Temple—a wealthy and charitable lady, personally unknown to any one immediately connected with, or interested in the charity—made a donation to the hospital of £1000, on condition that the adjoining mansion (just then vacant) was forthwith hired on a long lease, and used for the enlargement of the infantile Infirmary. It is needless to say that the condition was no barrier to the acceptance of the donation, especially as Miss Grace Temple through her solicitor promised to give such further aid to the charity as should secure it from insolvency.

The physicians, and surgeons, and members of the Committee were all alike in the dark as to who this Miss Grace Temple could be. The Committee had good reason to believe in her existence, for her solicitor gave them a check, drawn out and signed "Grace Temple," for £1000, and on the check being presented at the bank it was duly honored. So the next house was taken, and, in grateful acknowledgment of our mysterious benefactor's liberality, it was called "Grace Temple," and the name of "Grace Temple" was painted upon the walls of each of the wards.

And now the reader knows as well as I do myself how it was that, eight years after my flight from Laughton in the night-mail, I came to be sitting at a window in the first floor of an antique mansion in Marchioness Street.

CHAPTER III.

A VULGAR COMFORTER.

JUST as we called the second mansion of which our hospital was composed "Grace Temple," we had a name for the original house of the Institution. In the former half of the eighteenth century it was the residence of a famous physician, whose museum was a feature of the town, and into whose rooms all the great people of the country, and all distinguished travelers from foreign countries, found their way. So we call it "The Doctor." "The Doctor" was set apart for the sterner business of the hospital—the fever ward, and the infectious ward, and the ward for cases which gave little promise of recovery. "Grace Temple" had the nursery, and the quiet room for convalescents, and the day sleeping-room, and the play-room—liberally furnished with swings, and rocking-horses, and a magnificent patent indoor see-saw. "The Doc-

tor's Garden" was given up as a lounging-place for the house-surgeon and his friends, and was also used as a drying-ground for hospital linen; but "Grace Temple's Garden" was kept with great care, and was provided with a wealth of grots, and bowers, and secret corners for the little patients to play in. How the sick children enjoyed "Grace Temple's Garden," in dingy, deserted Marchioness Street!

My duties in Marchioness Street were continuous, and sometimes harassing, but by God's blessing they were a constant comfort to me. Indeed, if I could put all my life before the reader, as it had passed hour after hour for those six years in the hospital, he would be surprised at finding how cheerful I was now and then. There was one side of deep gloom to my life, but otherwise I had much to be thankful for. By degrees a terrible certainty had grown upon me—that there was only one explanation to Etty's silence. I did not conceive it possible that she was under a physical restraint that precluded her from sending a letter to me; and I was sure that were she married she would at least have communicated to me that much of her position. It never occurred to me that she might be dead. After she had maintained her silence for two entire years I always thought of her as erring. God, who comforted me in my trouble, knows how, in the silent hours of night, the tears of my old affection for her wetted my pillow. But I schooled myself to fulfill her last request. "Dear Tibby," she had written, "do think charitably of me. Try to remember only the best of me." And in a great degree I succeeded in doing as she had asked me. I habitually, when recalling her, compelled myself to think of all that was sweetest and most beautiful in our life at Farnham Cobb—the old far-off time when she used nightly to kneel at my knees, and, turning up her six-year-old face to me, pray to "Our Father, who art in heaven;" the day when she was confirmed; the sacred morning on which she for the first time took the sacrament; the efforts she had made to subdue her too impetuous temper; the solemn purpose she had formed to be a woman worthy to be Julian's wife! It was on such points in her life and character that I resolutely mused. And to my doing so I very much attribute a pleasant and most cheering hope (which grew up within me till it amounted to a sense of certainty) that one day she would return to me again, and be my own Etty, and join with me in daily supplication to Our Father to preserve us from evil.

It did not occur to me, till long after all occasion for such comfort had ceased, that this hope was granted to me by the Heavenly Mercy as a support to my weakness, and a refreshment in my sharpest moments of dejection. I therefore never thanked God for it then as I do now.

By degrees this sweet anticipation so colored my entire life that on New-Year's Days, when I reflected on the past year and looked forward to the coming one, I used to wonder if that opening year were the one in which my confidence would be justified. And I used to say, "Oh, dear Father, if it seem good to Thee, let Etty come home ere this year be done!" By "home" I meant my embrace. That was the home I had to offer her.

Thus I had more content than I can well make the reader understand.

But in other ways I found peace. Fortunately my private grief did not embitter me. I saw so clearly that my sorrow was exceptional, that it was in no way whatever an indication as to the ordinary distribution of tribulation in this world. And in enabling me to see this, God showed signal care for me. When I had fairly recognized the fact that a preponderance of happiness was the rule of human life, my exceptional sorrow became greatly less. It would ill become me, who have been so singularly blessed, to speak in a self-sufficient way about my own experiences, or to imply that any portion of the suffering of those who were once my fellow-sufferers is due to fault of theirs; but with earnest and unobtrusive sympathy I suggest to the unhappy of the earth, that they should strive to look beyond their individual trials, and not permit grief to discolor their vision. For myself I know the great comfort I derived, in my retreat in Marchioness Street, from meditating on the happiness from which I was cut off; and I am sure that if God had not led me to do so, I should have been far more sad. For mere pleasure I rarely went beyond the precincts of the hospital, save at night, and then only for a walk up and down the pavement, or for a saunter in Gray's Inn Garden, all by myself; but whenever I *did* so, I relished the sight of happiness. I enjoyed seeing the little children at close of day, playing on their fathers' and mothers' knees in the shops of Lamb's Conduit Street, and Red Lion Street. I said, "Heaven bless you! I wish I might go with you!" when a carriage full of bright girls in evening dress, bound for the ball-room or the theatre, passed me in the street. And a favorite diversion of mine, when my day's work was over, and my little patients were all asleep in the wards, was to get a healthy, happy English novel—descriptive of joyful home life—and forget the world in its pages.

My sorrow varied very much in intensity. It came upon my soul in distinct tides with regularly recurrent paroxysms, even as fever makes its war on the body, or pain racks the nerves. But fortunately the Power that presided over my rising up and my lying down taught me how to take a philosophic view of my case, and to treat my mental affliction judiciously. Whenever my grief had strongest possession of me, I fixed my thoughts with more than ordinary resolution on the little nameless duties of the day. Instead of looking within myself at every idle moment, I looked out of myself at the clock, and said, "Another twenty minutes and Dr. Merriam will be here;" or "Ten minutes hence Mr. Giles, the surgeon, will want the new bandages;" or I found out I must hasten down into the kitchen and look after the soup, or bustle about and see that tea and evening meal for the convalescents should not be a moment after the appointed time. If I were asked what, above all other mundane conditions, I most desire for those who labor and are heavily laden with sorrow, I should answer, that they may have each day of their lives an endless succession of trivial offices to discharge; offices the performance of which requires no great mental strain, but compels the actor in some measure to forget his or her own self.

This was one way in which duty comforted me.

But I had another solace from duty.

A faithful discharge of my appointed tasks saved me from a sense of isolation amidst the dense multitudes of my fellow-creatures, spared me that most dreary, and dismal, and torquifying conviction which those groan under who (without pleasures to divert them) stand in the court of their own consciences accused of utter uselessness in the great human family. From such a benumbing consciousness my humble toil saved me; and at the times when the blackest tides were rolling over me I could always say at night, while I lay awake without power to sleep, "When it is daylight I shall be happier, for then I shall have more work to do. I know my work is needed. And so I will go on as I have begun till Etty comes home."

I had yet another solace from duty, and, next to a secret hope that my patient labor was a service acceptable to my Saviour, it was the greatest of all the various consolations so derived.

I slowly made friends among the fathers and mothers of the sick children. Months after their babes had been restored to health or placed in the grave, some of them would call upon me, to tell me how the sick child fastened was prospering, or how the sick child taken to heaven was remembered. And thus it came to pass also that when I went into Lamb's Conduit Street, or Red Lion Street, or Theobald's Road, to make purchases of articles necessary for the hospital, I seldom returned home without a smile and a hearty word.

The lesson of the rose had come home to me: "There is no lot in life so stern, and cold, and hard, but it has somewhere a warm and secret corner in which human affection can blossom."

Dear, dear grandfather, your words proved true!

CHAPTER IV.

HYDE PARK.

THE July to which the reminiscences of the three preceding chapters have more than once pointed was a month in which I suffered much bodily indisposition, consequent on heat and fatigue. I was so much more pale and thin than it was my wont to be, that people began to cheer me with sympathetic assurances that I looked very ill indeed. "What a white, ghostly sort of person your head-nurse is!" I overheard a lady from the West End of the town (paying a visit of charity to the hospital) say to Dr. Merriam, who, much to my relief, replied (though he did not know I was within ear-shot), "Never mind that, she is a capital matron." And the next day the kind physician said to me in his soft, winning voice, "Don't you think, Miss Tree, a change of air and scene would do you good? Now my wife is staying with her children at Brighton. She has a large house there, and would be delighted to receive you as her visitor. Do get into the coach and make a trip to Brighton. The sea-breeze would put color into your cheeks." I told the considerate doctor what I thought of his invitation, but I declined to avail myself of it, saying that London had been a good friend to me for eight years, and I did not wish to lay my temporary lassitude to its charge.

The next day Mr. Rover, the house-surgeon (a fine-hearted young man who had recently entered the hospital, after completing his course of study at St. Bartholomew's), attacked me on the same subject in a different but not less cordial manner.

"I say, Miss Tree," observed the young surgeon, "it'll never do for you to get out of health. Dr. Merriam tells me you won't leave town; but any how you ought to take the change of a cheerful walk in the bright quarters of the town every day. I am like you in not thinking very highly of the country, but I couldn't get on if I never stirred out of this dingy old street. You ought to take an omnibus up to Hyde Park, and give your head and lungs a holiday under the green trees. You'll hardly know you are breathing when you get there, the atmosphere at the West End is so much more clear and pure than it is here."

It was quite a new thought to me.

Hyde Park—sunny, green, and full of gay equipages!

"Mr. Rover," I said, "I'll take your advice. On Monday next I'll get into an omnibus and ride up to Hyde Park."

"Bravo! you're a sensible woman, Miss Tree. If you'll allow me, I'll put on my best hat and coat and escort you."

"No," I answered, "that would obviate the purpose of the trip. I want to get out of the way of every thing that can put me in mind of Marchioness Street, of which you are a part."

The good-natured young man laughed heartily at my thus declining his company, and left me with an exhortation I should any how carry out my resolution.

Hyde Park!—I had been eight years in London, and had never seen either Hyde Park, or Regent's Park, or St. James's Park, or Regent Street, or Westminster Abbey, or St. Paul's Cathedral. The streets and squares in the immediate neighborhood of Marchioness Street were the extent of my ordinary perambulations. Holborn I had strayed into about half a dozen times; and lately, by the friendship of the keeper of the northern gate of Gray's Inn, I had frequently enjoyed a walk after dark in Bacon's avenue, in the Gray's Inn Gardens. I of course was not altogether ignorant of the places I have just mentioned as having never seen, for I had read of them in books and newspapers; and years ago I had heard Mr. Gurley describe them, when Etty and I had planned a vacation excursion to the metropolis. "Is it possible," I can imagine some of my readers exclaiming, "that a well-educated woman, having health and a certain amount of liberty, can have lived eight years in London, in this nineteenth century, without having ever seen Hyde Park?" Is it possible? Oh, my dear friends, there are far stranger things, and nearer to your own doors than Marchioness Street, that you know nothing of!

The omnibus dropped me at the corner of the Edgeware Road, and, entering the park, I looked on a scene far finer than any thing I had anticipated would reward my enterprise. The noble mansions, the trees, the water, and the expanse of green! The astonishment and the gladness caused by what I saw made tears come into my eyes. It was such a contrast to Marchioness Street. That I should have lived so many years

in London, and know nothing of it but my own quarter! I asked a gentleman my way to the "Duke of Wellington's house." He smiled at my inquiry (doubtless thinking it strange that I had not called it "Apsley House"), and walked with me for a hundred yards to a point where he could direct my attention to the windows, covered with wire fences. Then the gentleman left me, and I paced to and fro, gazing at the Duke's house, and recalling how Julian Gower (as school-boy and young man) never passed through London without looking at the residence of the Pater Patriar.

The season, which had been a long one, was near its end; but there were still many grand people in town, and fortunately for me it was just the hour when the aristocracy were accustomed to ride and drive in the park. Carriages of every description rolled by me in every direction, and equestrians (ladies as well as gentlemen) on sleek blood-horses, that reminded me of Mr. Petersham's stud at Laughton Abbey, passed before me.

I spent an hour in gazing at the brilliant equipages, the well-dressed pedestrians, and all the features of the gay, inspiring exhibition, when I retired from the foot-path which runs round the point where the *Achilles* stands, and seated myself on a wooden bench under the trees, where I had a command of the scene on three sides of me.

It was with difficulty that I could persuade myself that demure and dingy Tibby Tree, the matron of the Hospital for Sick Children, was really looking at the bright objects and noble people before her, and was not in a dream. It did really cross my mind that, from causes either within me or without me, I was the victim of an illusion. And this feeling came back with greater strength when I saw a lady pass before me, and look at me with an unmistakable expression of recognition and surprise, and then pass on.

She was tall, slight, rather well-looking, dressed richly, but with striking plainness, in silk of that neutral tint which milliners call "slight" or "half" mourning. It was evident that she was a lady—I mean by that a member of the gentle and polite classes. Her whole style told me this; her elegant figure and graceful walk, the faultless taste of her attire, and the benignant composure of her face, which was her least attractive point. *And she knew me!* Who could she be? Eight years ago I had left Laughton, so that I might live where no one would know me, and since that time I had never, to my knowledge, been seen by any person acquainted with my early history. The time was when the unknown lady's recognition of me would have troubled me; but I had in part outgrown my morbid fear of observation.

Two or three minutes elapsed and the lady returned, as before, with no companion, either of her own or a menial rank. I watched her as she approached, and decided that she could not be more than my own age however well she bore her years. Of course, with all the advantages of toilet, she looked much younger than I. This time she did not pass me, but coming straight to the bench on which I was sitting took a seat by my side.

"This is a pleasant change for you after the

confinement and toil of the hospital," she said, in a soft and conciliating manner.

"Why," I answered, starting as it flashed upon me that I had seen her on the previous day, "I saw you last Sunday evening in Marchioness Street; you passed down the street twice, and each time you passed you looked up at the Hospital for Sick Children."

"Yes; and I saw the matron sitting at one of the windows of 'Grace Temple,'" was the answer, made with all possible composure.

"I wondered how you came there," I observed.

"Oh," she replied, carelessly, "I have often heard of the place; indeed, my name is on your list of subscribers, and I thought last Sunday evening I should like to see the outside of the hospital, although I had never penetrated into its interior."

We continued our conversation. Partly in answer to her inquiries and partly without solicitation, and simply because I liked her aspect and first address, I gave her a little insight into my mode of life in the institution which her purse helped to maintain. I told her that it was my first visit to the park in the whole course of my life, and that though I had been for six years matron of the hospital, I very rarely went beyond the immediate neighborhood of Marchioness Street. She asked me if I did not find my existence cheerless in so desolate a place, and I replied in the negative; then she inquired, with a sort of fine-lady bewilderment (which I thought affected and not natural to her), how I could endure such an employment as I had there, and yet speak of it contentedly; to which rather ill-judged remark I responded simply that I liked the employment "because the duties were congenial to my tastes."

"That's good," she said, with a satisfied air, to this answer; "contentment is a great thing. You would do good work if you would manage to impart some of the air serenity to the grand people who take the air here, and would die of fright if they were even driven through your gloomy street."

"They seem very happy," I answered.

"Do they?" she answered, sharply, yet not scoffingly, but rather with a womanly sadness. "Surely they don't strike you as happy! Their carriages and horses and servants have a holiday aspect, and their clothes are delicate as wedding garments; but *they* are miserable enough."

"I would rather not think them so," I answered.

"Why?"

"Because to do so would pain me. Before you passed me here the first time I was sitting in the midst of visions of their happiness. When I saw a young girl drive by, with her mother by her side, and a gentleman of an age suitable for her husband in the carriage on the seat opposite to her, I said, 'She'll be bride soon.' When a carriage full of young children, under the care of a lady, went by, I said, 'What a happy mother! how full of gladness she must be with those lovely children!' If I were to accept your doctrine I couldn't do this."

"No. You would think how the young girl was scheming, and fawning, and pretending, and *lying* (it's a rough word for a lady's lips), with smiles and soft speeches, to catch a rich husband

who would sign her a check with the right hand for every kiss she gave him, as he did so, on the left cheek. You'd think how the lovely children were only gamesters and coquettes, knaves and flirts—disguised by infancy."

"Do not speak so," I answered. "Your gentle voice contradicts your words. Should I be better, or the world better, if I put faith in them?"

"'Tis best to take true views of life."

"Every view of life," I answered, "is an ideal that in some way or other is contradicted by the world's practice. But the view of life, which is at the same time best and nearest to truth, is the ideal formed from an observation of what good people try to be in their best moments."

"Such an ideal would lead those who cherish it into grave mistakes."

"Oh, madam," I answered, gravely, "a woman shouldn't say so."

I did not wish to exchange more words with her. I felt that we were ill-matched companions; and for all that her voice was so silver sweet, and her eyes were powerful with earnest gentleness, I feared that her life was tainted with a poison that was infectious. So I looked as though I did not care to look at her again.

"Come," she said, "I'll tell you a story of real life, and you shall say how it fits in with your ideal. Had you been here two years since, at this hour of almost any day in the summer months, you would have seen a more lovely girl by far than any you have seen this day. She would have appeared before you riding on a black or white horse (she rode them on alternate days, when she did not drive a phaeton drawn by a pair of cream-colored ponies), and as she approached you, you would have seen the noblest of the land raise their hats and bow profoundly to her. As her glossy horse passed you, daintily stepping or lightly caracoling, champing its bit and throwing about its silky tail after the flies; and as the girl with a radiant smile of trustful innocence returned the deferential salutations which greeted her on all sides, you, with your blind faith and unsophisticated credulity, would have said, 'That sweet girl is born of a noble house; purity without stain, sacred love, divine mercy have set their seals upon her brow; thrice happy the man of proud lineage and ancient honors who can win her for a wife!' Now I'll give you the reverse of the picture. I'll recount that fair girl's history."

I knew that she was bent on shocking me with a revelation of crime; I could not (though I dreaded the coming narrative as a child might dread the blows of an unkind nurse) implore her to spare me. There was a fascination in her voice that forbade interruption; ay, more, a fascination that made me, even in my dread, wish for the anguish she was about to inflict.

"The girl was born and educated in the country. She and her sister were the orphan granddaughters of a worthy old clergyman, who educated them tenderly, and in all respects as girls of their rank of life should be educated. When the old man died the girls were left poor; but they were able to earn a comfortable livelihood without any sacrifice of those notions of dignity to which they had been reared. They set up a school in a little country town, and prospered in their calling; the sound good sense of the elder sister (who was, as I have been told, a plain little

body) and the graceful attractions of the beautiful sister (about whom I am going to tell you) forming a good combination of qualities for commercial purposes. The beautiful sister was engaged to a young man in her own rank of life—a young man holding some sort of agency in foreign parts, whether in America, or China, or elsewhere, I can not say. He has been described to me as a young man altogether superior to the common herd of young men. On both sides it was an engagement of love. He had no money, the girl no prospects; but they hoped, as inexperienced lovers are wont to hope, that a few years, spent in waiting and working, would terminate in their wedding. Do I tire you? Would you like to hear more?"

"You know I am listening," I said, hoarsely, my heart thumping against my breast, and almost choking me.

"Adjoining to the town where the sisters had their school was a great county-house, on the enlargement and decoration of which a vain *parvenu* spent the thousands his beggared descendants now sorely need. This house was visited, as such houses are, by what simple folk term 'distinguished society;' and 'the distinguished society,' having nothing better to do in the country, amused themselves with petting and flattering the village schoolmistresses who lived at the park gate in a picturesque cottage *ornée*. Among this distinguished society was an officer in the Indian army, who carried the game so far as to swear he loved the pretty sister, with her innocent face and golden hair. Well, what do you think she did? Told her magnificent suitor that her hand was already disposed of? Said him 'nay,' because womanly honor and duty, as well as affection, precluded her from returning his passion? No such thing! He was a member of 'distinguished society'—was reputed to be wealthy. A fig for her lover in foreign parts! She put herself in the hands of 'the officer' (poor doll!—the title tickled her! The young man in foreign parts was only 'a clerk'), and he treated her as she deserved to be treated. She had thrown the 'clerk' aside without compunction, and when it answered his purpose to do so the distinguished officer and member of 'high society' threw her aside just as contemptuously. Possibly the man offered to marry her, but if so, he didn't fulfill his promise; and in due course, when he had grown tired of his toy, he went back to India, where he has become a hero. But the sweet innocent child knew how to console herself. She established herself in town, and commenced a career of unblushing sin—of triumphant wickedness—such as I can not reflect upon without giving utterance to the indignant contempt which a woman feels when she witnesses the shame of her sex. As I told you, when that creature, with her innocent smiles, and her waxen face, and her blue eyes, rode or drove her ponies in the park, at least one *half* of the world rendered her more respect than the same beauty united to virtue could ever have commanded. How does my story fit in with your ideal?"

I did not reply to the cruel question; but, looking into the lady's face, I said, "Where is that poor girl? Take me to her. The sight of me would make her repent."

"I lead you to her! Bless me, I have no no-

tion where she is. I have been talking of two years since. She had already been a feature of the park for a season. Two summers are a long life for such butterflies. Last summer she did not make her appearance, and this year all the proud nobles who used to raise their hats to her have forgotten that such a character ever engaged their attention. She has gone down the stream. The current of fashionable frivolity quickly bore the frail, airy vessel of her beauty over these shining waters. Dancing to and fro, she left her patrician admirers; borne on to her appointed end, she is now perhaps sailing over a less translucent portion of the stream, which ever grows more murky and impure, more covered with unwholesome scum, and more thickly populated with unsightly objects, as it approaches nearer to that dead, silent, motionless sea to which it flows—merrily enough at first, but very sluggishly at last. Perhaps her voyage is already at an end. Possibly her cockle-shell of a boat went down beneath the scum of the river, or is lying at the bottom of the dead, and silent, and motionless sea of corruption!"

I heard no more of her words. She continued to speak; but the strain of her utterances, mingled with the strain of sound caused by the hollow rumble of the rolling carriages, and with the breeze fluttering the leaves above us, so that not one word of them could be separated from the confused murmur. Then objects flitted quickly before my eyes, and came back and danced round me. The carriages, and horses, and riders, and prattling pedestrians had the appearance of surrounding me and doing something with me.

The next fact I remember of that day's proceedings was being lifted out of a carriage in Marchioness Street, and being conveyed up the wide staircase of "Grace Temple" to my bedroom.

On quite coming to myself all that I could learn from the hospital nurses was that I had fainted in Hyde Park, and that a lady, who was passing at the time, and knew where I lived, had brought me home in her carriage. The nurse, who had opened the door of the hospital to admit me, had endeavored to make the lady state her name, by observing that "Miss Tree would, when she 'came round,' like to know the name of the lady to whom she was indebted for her kindness." But this mode of interrogation was met by the lady with crushing frankness. "No; I don't mean to give you my name, *because* I don't wish either you or Miss Tree to know it." This was the lady's answer.

The nurses described the lady as tall, and slight, and well-looking—dressed in silk, which had the aspect of half-mourning. I was unconscious when the carriage stopped in Marchioness Street, but I had "come to myself" on being lifted out of the vehicle. On hearing that I had opened my eyes, and recovered possession of my faculties, the lady (who had entered the hospital before I "came to") took an immediate departure, without again looking at me. It struck the nurses that the lady wished to avoid being recognized by me.

This was all the nurses could tell me; and consequently I was left in doubt as to whether the lady who had accompanied me from Hyde Park to Marchioness Street was the same lady with whom I had talked under the trees.

CHAPTER V.

CLUSTER-TATTING.

I did not repeat my excursion to Hyde Park. The murky neighborhood of Marchioness Street was the proper quarter for me.

It never occurred to me to question for a moment whether the strange lady, who had accosted me near Apsley House, had been speaking of my sister or of another girl; so certain was I that Etty, and no one else, had been the object of portraiture. If I felt doubt on any point connected with the mysterious interview, it was on the question whether the lady knew she was telling the history of my dear lost child to that same lost child's sister. The lady was a subscriber to the hospital, and as such of course had a copy of the annual report of the Committee regularly transmitted to her. My name of "Tabitha Tree" always appeared in the list of the officers and servants attached to the institution. It was therefore in all probability known to the lady who was so familiar with the misdeeds and shame of "Annette Tree." It was true, she had said nothing which demonstrated she knew either my name, or that of the wretched girl whose course she had so forcibly described. It was also more than probable that Etty on leaving Laughton had desisted from using her own name. "But," I said to myself, when I had summed these and many other similar points of consideration, "what does it matter whether I am recognized or not? The reputation I have earned here will shield me from unkind criticism; and I have outlived the feelings which once confused my ideas of misfortune and shame."

But though I said this, I did not send my proper address to Mr. and Mrs. Gurley. A secretive habit is perhaps the strongest and most incurable of all habits; and consequently, now that a sense of humiliation and disgrace no longer compelled me to hide myself from observation, I still wished to run as few chances as possible of being unearthed by my old friends of the corn country.

After all, the painful intelligence communicated by the lady in Hyde Park was only a vivid picture of what I had myself for years vaguely imagined. I had long regarded my sister as erring; and the lady's narrative had proved to me that my opinion was correct. It effected, however, something more. It raised in my breast a feeling that the time was fast approaching when Etty would come home to me. Two years before she had taken her last rides in the park. Since then she had vanished from those bright scenes of her butterfly triumph, and fallen into more obscure, if not less reprehensible, ways. To use the lady's simile, the poor child's frail bark of beauty had gone lower down the stream; but my certain confidence (God be praised!) still remained unshaken, that it would neither sink beneath the scum of the murky river, nor drop down irrecoverably in the silent, motionless sea. Hope whispered to me that ere the year ended my darling would come home.

I recovered my strength without going out of town; but when my vigor had returned I still sorely needed mental composure. I became restless, unable to sleep at night, subject to sudden startings, and liable to fancy myself address-

ed, or even touched, when there was no one near to accost or lay hand upon me. I went more frequently to walk in the Gray's Inn Gardens, not so much for the quiet and solitude of Bacon's avenue as for a passing word with the keeper of the north gate. This keeper of the north gate of Gray's Inn was a great friend of mine. His only child—an unhappy little cripple—had died in the Hospital for Sick Children, and he cherished a lively gratitude to me for what he called "my goodness to his little 'un." He was a sober married man, and advanced in years. The lost child, indeed, had been a child of his old age, and as such had been beloved. The honest man was my letter-receiver; and whenever I wished for a quiet walk after dark I used to tap at his door, and get him to open the iron gate in the railings intervening between his lodge and Raymond Buildings, and let me into the Inn Gardens. Often, with the moon and stars shining clear above the tops of the trees, or with a sharp blustrous wind tossing the black clouds, and driving them one above another, have I walked in those gardens—while the light of the barristers' lamps and candles illuminating the windows of Verulam Buildings and Raymond Buildings gave me a feeling of security!

Why didn't Etty write? Surely there must be a letter in the North Lodge from Laughton, inclosing one sent to me there by my darling! Surely there must, although there was none three nights back. I would step round to Gray's Inn after the convalescent children were in bed, and ask my friend the porter if he hadn't a letter. Of course the porter would have gladly brought my letters to the hospital; but to permit him to do so would have jarred against that secretive habit which had become a second nature to me. If I tried to give the reader a just idea of this peculiarity, which had been forced upon me by circumstances, I should fail; so I will not allude to it again, but only say that it was well displayed by my always going to the porter for my letters, instead of allowing him to bring them to me in Great Marchioness Street.

"Have you a letter?" I used to ask my receiver, when he answered my tap.

"No, madam," the ordinary answer would be; "sorry I am there is no letter; but there's the garden."

As I returned from my walk in the garden, and passed the night-porter's lodge on my way home, I usually found him on the look-out for me, smoking a pipe. If it was a fine night, without clouds or wind, the simple fellow would make some remark to the effect that "it was a sweet night for him to smoke his pipe and think about 'the little 'un' in;" or if it was a rough, blustrous night, he would say "the wind screamed and racketed so round the corners that he could not think of the little 'un." Once I asked him if the noise outside the gates in King's Road and Gray's Inn Lane did not disturb his meditations on "the little 'un," when he answered, "No, not in the least, for 'the little 'un' was always very partial to the roar of the streets, maintaining that it closely resembled the music of a church organ." These were our only topics, and almost our only sentences of conversation; but they kept us good friends and congenial companions for several years.

But the letter never came.

No; it never came.

My longing was answered in another fashion.

In the November following my memorable excursion to Hyde Park a patient was admitted into the hospital under circumstances which caused the Committee considerable excitement. It was a part of my duties to receive the children admitted on reception mornings, and make an entry in the hospital register of certain particulars concerning each new patient. The ceremony and forms of admission were these: On the Tuesday of each week (which was "the receiving-day") every poor person wishing to place a sick child in the hospital had to appear with the invalid and an "admission order" signed by a governor (each subscriber of two guineas was a governor, and was entitled to sign six "admission orders" per annum). One of the physicians then examined the applicant for admission, and, on finding him or her a fit subject for medical or surgical treatment in the wards, countersigned the order of admission. On this the patient was entitled to all the benefits of the institution; and I had to enter in the college register such patient's name, age, parentage, residence of parents, and the name of the recommending governor, together with an inventory of the clothes worn by the patient at the date of admission. I had also to make the mother or responsible friend of each child (depositing such child in the hospital) sign a printed form, engaging to remove the child promptly on receiving a notice from me to do so, and also engaging, in case of death, to provide the child with suitable interment.

The reader is now in a position to understand the following entry in the Hospital Register for Indoor Patients:

Patient. No. 1766.

Name. Alfred Jourdain.

Age. Six years and nine months.

Sex. Male.

Parentage. Mother dead. Father, Robert Jourdain, a shoemaker with irregular employment; residing at 4 Lisson Court, New Road.

Name of Recommending Governor. Miss Grace Temple.

Name and Address of Person depositing the Child (adding, if possible, the relation of such person to the child) and engaging to provide, in case of Death, for its interment. } Anna Harney, the Grandmother of the child; residing at 4 Lisson Court, New Road.

Inventory of Articles of Clothing, brought by Alfred Jourdain into the Hospital for Sick Children:

1. A cap.
2. A coat of black and white check stuff.
3. A linen shirt.
4. A pair of trowsers of the same material as the coat.
5. A pair of cotton socks.
6. One boot.
7. A woollen comforter for the neck.

The words in *Italics* constituted the ordinary printed form of the Hospital Register Book. The words filling up the vacant spaces of the form were in my handwriting.

I was present in the receiving-room when Alfred Jourdain (Indoor Patient No. 1766) was brought into the apartment by Anna Harney—a stout, dirty, coarse, harsh-looking woman. Dr. Merriam had already spent two hours of his valuable time in examining applicants for admission and prescribing for out-patients; and he, as well as I, supposed his morning's work over, when this Anna Harney entered with the child in her arms, swaddled in a thick shawl. The name affixed to her order of admission immediately attracted Dr. Merriam's attention, for though Miss Grace Temple had so greatly bene-

fited the hospital she had never before sent a patient to it. At length, however, she had transmitted to us one in a bad plight. Although he was approaching the close of his seventh year, the child was as diminutive as many children only three or four years old. The thin face, with all the curves of healthy childhood straightened out so as to give acute angles at the chin, the nose, the cheek, and jawbones; the nervous, watchful eyes having in their prodigious pupils an expression of pathetic earnestness; the pink flush in the centre of his pallid cheeks; the dry lips, and the bowed frame, gave the particulars of the child's state to the most casual observers. Dr. Merriam took his stethoscope, and, having listened for a few seconds to the child's breathing, said, with a glance that I knew well how to interpret, "Acute Tuberculosis—Miss Tree. Far advanced. You must manage to give the child a bed." Though neither the sick child nor Anna Harney had a glimpse of the doctor's real communication, I understood him to say, just as plainly as if he had said so in the most explicit words, "This poor little boy is suffering from the pulmonary consumption of young children. He'll be dead in a few days. As we can not by any possibility do him any good, I would rather not admit him, for the fatal termination of his hopeless case will help to swell our mortality list, and frighten the public. But I must admit him—for, look, he brings Miss Grace Temple's order!" So the miserable child was given into my custody; and Anna Harney having engaged to be, in case of his death, responsible for Alfred Jourdain's suitable interment, took her departure, just as Dr. Merriam ran off to his carriage to visit his West End patients.

In the extract just put before the reader from the Hospital Register, he can not fail to have observed another remarkable entry, besides the name of the recommending governor—the entry, namely, of a *linen shirt* among the articles of the boy's wearing apparel. How came the child possessed of a *linen shirt*? Such a piece of clothing no child before him had brought into the institution, from the day of its being opened. The shirts of poor children are made of the coarsest material; whereas this child had an undergarment of linen of the finest texture. What made this circumstance all the stranger, was that in other respects the child was wretchedly clad. A reference to the inventory will satisfy the reader of that.

The number of new admissions to the wards that day was unusually great; and the nurses were proportionately busy—as it was a rule of the institution that no child should be taken into the wards where other children were until it had had a warm bath, and (if the precaution seemed necessary) had been clothed in fresh raiment supplied by the hospital. Alfred Jourdain had therefore to lie on a couch, warmly covered up, before the waiting-room fire, for more than an hour, ere he could have his bath and be put to bed. At length, however, that task was accomplished; and just about the same time I took up his discarded clothes (in lieu of which he was supplied with a flannel jacket and night-dress from my stores) and examined them, before describing them in the register.

"Linen," I said, as my touch recognized the soft, cool material, so unlike harsh, hot cotton—

"it can not be." But *linen* it was—filthily begrimed and ragged, without a doubt, but still linen. It was already getting dark; for though there was no fog, the month of November was, according to its wont, causing the days to close in early. I went to the window to examine the little shirt more nearly, when I found it was ornamented with a lace edging round the lappets. The lace, like the rest of the garment, was as black as if it had been just taken from a dust-hole; but it had a stronger effect upon me than the linen fabric. It was an edging, of the work known among ladies as "tattooing." As a girl at Farnham Cobb, I had been very fond of and clever in the management of tattooing-work. I invented three altogether new patterns, one of which was very pretty, and was consequently a source of much pride to me. I called it "cluster-tattooing," because it was made in little bunches or clusters of work done in imitation of the "forget-me-not" blossom. "Merciful Heavens!" I exclaimed to myself, "this is my work. This is some of the cluster-tattooing I made for Etty, I *did* it." Men perhaps will be incredulous as to the possibility of a person's recognizing her own fancy work, after ten or twelve years have elapsed since its manufacture. But such incredulity will not be shared by women. I knew it was impossible that I was mistaken. That was my cluster-tattooing—the same that I had invented, and wrought thread by thread, and made of most exquisite fineness and delicacy for a New-Year's present for Etty.

How came the poor child, just admitted to the hospital with Miss Grace Temple's order, to be dressed in a garment so ornamented with the work of my fingers? No, it could not be! It was impossible!

Hastening to the ward in which I had ordered a bed to be prepared for the child, I sought him out, and subjected him to a searching scrutiny.

"Why do you look so, ma'am?" the little fellow said. "I have done nothing wrong."

I kissed him, and comforting him with the assurance that I believed him to be a very good boy, I knelt down by his bedside and spoke to him—enticing him to confide in me.

"Have you any brothers and sisters, dear?" I asked.

"No," he said, shaking his head; "no brothers and sisters, only grandmother."

"Have you always lived in Lisson Court?"

"Oh—no—not always; but a long time. Since mamma died. When she was alive I didn't live in Lisson Court."

It was strange the child should talk of his *mamma* and his *grandmother*.

"Where did you live? Can you recollect the name of the place?"

"No," he answered, shaking his head wearily; "but it was not Lisson Court."

"Was it in the country?" I inquired.

"The country," he repeated. "Where is the country, ma'am? I don't know where the country is."

"It's where the green trees and the flowers are."

"Oh," he exclaimed, a smile of intelligence and triumph—the saddest child's smile I have ever witnessed—crossing his wan face, and sharpening all its numerous acute angles. "you mean the *square*! No, we didn't live in the *square*."

"Had your mamma hair like yours, or was it black?"

"I don't remember," he said, after musing a few seconds, "but she was very pretty—she was like the lady in the theatre, only much prettier."

As he said this he closed his eyes in sheer weariness, and in two minutes he was asleep.

As soon as I saw him fast held by tranquil slumber I went down into the kitchen, and having transacted my business in that quarter ascended to the ward in which he was, bearing a supply of beef-tea and wine for him. When I came again to his bedside he was still asleep, his extreme prostration having presented him with two hours of unbroken repose. I roused him, and gave him some of my strong beef-tea and two or three tea-spoonfuls of wine. "Thank you, dear mamma," he said, after taking the refreshment. "I shall be better soon. Thank you, mamma." As he murmured for a second time the most sacred human title a child can utter, he closed his eyes, and once more was asleep.

He looked at me again three hours afterward, when I induced him to take some more refreshment; and after surveying me in a doubtful, half-frightened manner, and after twice thanking me for my care, and the nice things I gave him, he said, "Please, ma'am, may I say my prayers?"

"Surely, dear child," I answered.

On this permission being granted, he coiled his limbs up wearily on his bed, and turned round on to his knees, and taking hold of my hand, he said the same child's prayer which I and Etty (like so many hundreds of thousands of children before and after us) used to say. But as a conclusion to his supplications he added, "And, pray God, take care of aunt!"

"Have you only one aunt, dear?" I asked, when he laid his head down again on his pillow.

He evidently did not understand me.

"Who is your aunt?"

"I haven't an aunt," he answered, with his old troubled look.

"Then why do you say, 'Pray, God, take care of aunt!'"

"Oh!" he cried, the same sad look of exultant intelligence crossing the sharpened features, "aunt isn't mine more than yours. She's the best woman that ever lived."

"Who taught you that prayer, dear?" I asked.

"Oh, mamma—to be sure—dear mamma."

As the child said this he raised his little thin hand and laid it upon the outside of the coverlet, and in another half-minute he was asleep again.

I had taken charge of that ward for the night, and as all the children were asleep, and no one was present to disturb me, and I had not already offered my nightly service of devotion, I said my prayers—kneeling by the little boy's bed, with my hand on his.

CHAPTER VI.

A TESTIMONIAL OF REGARD.

THE next day Dr. Merriam told me that about ten days would in all probability be the extent of Alfred Jourdain's sickness and life. Of course he could not speak with certainty as to the exact day. The child might even live for three weeks or a month. But his case was hopeless, and there was nothing to be done for him but to

keep him as comfortable as possible, by means of slight doses of stimulants and composing medicines administered alternately, with short intervals.

On Mondays and Fridays the parents and friends of sick children were in the habit of visiting them, no visitor being admitted into the wards on other days without a governor's order. For Friday, therefore, I waited impatiently, hoping that Anna Harney would visit her grandchild. Friday, however, came and passed away without Anna Harney appearing in Marchioness Street. Perhaps she would come on the following Monday, and give me an opportunity of examining her as to the history of the tatting and the wearer thereof. Possibly the garment might have been purchased in a lot of old clothes; but however it had come into Alfred Jourdain's possession it was a clue, by following out which I might discover Etty. Would Anna Harney come on Monday? I could not remain quiet, and let the day bring with it its own events. It was necessary for me to see Alfred Jourdain's grandmother forthwith, so I dispatched by the post the following note to Anna Harney, 4 *Lisson Court, New Road*:

"Miss Tree, the matron of the Hospital for Sick Children in Marchioness Street, wishes to see Anna Harney without delay. Perhaps Anna Harney could come to the hospital immediately she receives this note."

I waited impatiently for the result of this missive, but it brought neither the woman nor answer of any kind. When Monday had come to an end, and I had not seen the woman, I began to suspect that Alfred Jourdain had been left at the hospital with a false address. Occasionally, but by no means often, we had children left at the hospital by persons who never came to see them again, giving us all the trouble of transmitting them, on their recovery from sickness, to the parish authorities, or, on their death, to the grave. Rare as such frauds were, they were still frequent enough for us under ordinary circumstances to exercise precaution against them. Usually when I felt uncertain as to the character of the "responsible" friend, engaging to fetch a child on being summoned to do so, I caused a messenger to visit the "responsible" friend's address, and inquire about her, and report to me the result of his inquiries, before definitively admitting a new applicant among my flock, and dismissing the said "responsible friend." The appearance of Anna Harney was by no means prepossessing, and would have fully justified the investigation of suspicion. But the name of the recommending governor to the case made inquiry out of place, for even if we had suspected a fraud was about to be perpetrated on the hospital, the Committee would rather have submitted to it than have refused an applicant recommended by our great benefactress, Miss Grace Temple.

It would be an abuse of language to say that little Alfred Jourdain grew worse. He only passed on quickly to his end. Dr. Merrión's prognostication was right to a day. On the conclusion of the tenth day after his admission he expired. During those ten days I scarcely closed my eyes to sleep. It was my custom to walk at all hours of the night noiselessly about the wards of "The Doctor" and "Grace Temple," passing in review the lines of little cots containing my

patients, slowly climbing the enormous staircases of polished and dark-brown oak, and pausing for rest in the corners of the cold marble-floored halls or long passages—to watch the *Venuses*, and *Graces*, and *Satyr*s that variegated the vast windows through which the moonlight streamed, or the msteady street-lamps sent a flickering illumination. The nurses on night-duty were therefore accustomed to see me moving about at all hours. Some of them believed that I never slept. They had grounds for such an opinion during the last ten days and nights of—Case 1766—Tuberculosis.

Whenever the poor child slept, I left him. Whenever he opened his eyes, I saw their lids unclose. Most of his time was spent in tranquil slumber; and during his brief periods of comparative consciousness he took quietly and gratefully the nourishment and medicines offered to him—more often than not thinking he received them from the hands of his mamma. When he was more completely roused he would recognize me, thanking me for my goodness to him, and talking in his usual soft, plaintive, weary fashion of his dear dead mamma, who was so much prettier than "the lady at the theatre." Morning and night he coiled his little feeble, languid limbs up, and (as on the first night after his admission) keeping a hold (at the same time so firm and so frail) of my hand, repeated those old, old prayers. Such was the life of little Alfred Jourdain until the end came.

"Oh, ma'am," the little fellow said to me on the evening of the tenth day, "I can see mamma, and I can see heaven. It's all lamps and music. It's like a theatre."

They were his last words.

Ere another hour had ended he knew more than the wisest, and strongest, and most powerful of this world. He was in a land brighter than any "theatre," and was surrounded by forms more lovely than any "lady at the theatre" he had seen during his sad life.

By early dawn the next morning I sent the hospital messenger to *Lisson Court* for Anna Harney. The man returned, as I expected would be the case, with the announcement that no such persons as Anna Harney and Robert Jourdain were known of in that court. It was as I suspected. The child had been deserted by its unnatural "natural protectors."

The day next following Alfred Jourdain's death was the day for the weekly committee meeting. According to my invariable custom I presented myself with my register, my reports, my receipts, and lists of articles required for consumption during the next week. When my accounts had been inspected, the death which had occurred in one of the wards on the previous night was mentioned by the gentleman in the chair, and I drew his attention to the fact stated in my week's report, that the child's friends could not be discovered.

"Then," said the chairman, "the hospital must bear the expense of the funeral in the usual way. The child's was a bad case for admission; but still it would have been wrong to shut the door on any one bearing Miss Grace Temple's introduction. You will give the necessary orders about the funeral."

"If, Sir," I answered to the chairman, "you have no objection, and if the other gentlemen of

the Committee have no objection, I should like to bury the poor child myself."

"Surely, you can do that, Miss Tree," answered the chairman, opening his eyes slightly with an astonishment that was clearly sympathized in by the rest of the Committee. "But why should *you* incur the expense of his interment? It will consume a considerable sum out of your small annual salary. Don't let a passing sentiment mislead you. The hospital can afford such an expense better than you."

"I wish to bury the child," I answered quickly, "because I love him very dearly."

And having said these words, I picked up my papers and register, and hurried out of the room.

Dr. Merriion was in the committee-room when this occurred; and about two hours afterward, ere he left the hospital, he came into my private sitting-room, and spoke to me.

"Miss Tree," said the doctor, "the Committee have requested me to give you this trifling expression of their warm regard for you. They presume that the feelings which lead you to take upon yourself the charge of interring this poor child would be gratified by erecting a monument to his memory. The Committee have therefore asked me to present you with this purse containing twelve guineas, subscribed by them after you left the committee-room this morning. They will be obliged if you will expend the money on a memorial of the little boy, in whatever way you think best."

Such kindness fairly broke me down. I had slept so little and watched so much during the preceding ten days that my nerves were unsteady. So on Dr. Merriion thus addressing me I began to shed idle tears.

"Oh, dear Dr. Merriion!" I said, "what makes you all so good to me?"

"My dear Miss Tree," the physician answered, shaking my hand, "there is not a man of us in the habit of coming to this hospital, and of observing what goes on in its wards, who does not feel for you as he does for his own sisters."

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER HOME.

I BURIED Alfred Jourdain in the Highgate Cemetery.

But ere I took any steps to placing a memorial over his grave, I determined to satisfy myself more completely as to his birth and history.

When I expressed my thanks to the Committee of the hospital for their compliment and their gift, I said to the chairman, "My reason for feeling so warm an interest in the little boy is that I think I knew his mother years since. I may be mistaken, but circumstances which I need not mention have led to this impression; and if the Committee have no objection, I should like to put an advertisement in the daily papers, for the purpose of discovering the people who placed this poor boy here." To this request the Committee replied that I might take whatever steps I pleased, for they were sure that I should put no advertisement in the papers that could have any injurious effect on the hospital.

On this permission being accorded to me I caused the insertion in all the principal London

papers of the following advertisement: "*Alfred Jourdain and Anna Harney. Anna Harney who placed Alfred Jourdain in the Hospital for Sick Children is requested to communicate instantly with the matron of the hospital. Anna Harney will not be held responsible for expenses incurred for the child's funeral on the 16th ult., but will be presented by the matron with £2 for replying in a satisfactory manner to this advertisement, and £5 more if she gives the matron certain information. Hospital for Sick Children, Marchioness Street.*"

Two days after the publication of this notice a man rung the hospital bell and requested to see me. On being introduced to me in my private sitting-room, after the door had been closed upon us, he said, "I come from Anna Harney to know what you want."

He was a short, elderly, unshorn, unpleasant man, with nothing save a suspicious and sinister air to distinguish him from the ordinary herd of the mechanic class.

"I want to see her," I answered.

"Won't I do as well?"

"No, I must see her, and no one else."

"What for?"

"I have reason to think that the child Alfred Jourdain was not the son of a shoemaker in Lisson Court, and I desire to satisfy myself on the subject of his parentage."

"Who do you think he was?"

"That question," was my reply, "I must decline to answer."

"Umph! you're short, ma'am."

"I am, to questions that are out of place."

"What do you want to know about his birth for?"

"That question I must also decline answering. Have you any farther questions to put?"

The man was silent for a minute, during which time he bit a small piece of oat straw he had in his hand. He seemed as if he were employed in working out some calculations. The result of his meditation was that he said, abruptly,

"If you'll give me the two pounds I'll take you to Anna Harney."

"If I give you the money, what security will you give me that you'll do the work I require?"

"That's a fair question. The man will have to get up early who takes you in."

"He will," I answered, quietly accepting the compliment.

"If I take you to Anna Harney—into the room where she lives, and where you may see her, and then take you back again here safe and sound—will you give me £2?"

"Yes, I will," I answered after half-a-minute's consideration.

"That's £2 for myself; it'll make no difference to what you have to give her," he put in, like a dealer driving a hard bargain.

"Exactly. Take me to Anna Harney and I'll give her £2 for our interview. Then if you bring me back here safe, and without having undergone improper treatment of any kind, I'll conduct you into this room, give you £2, and then bid you 'good-evening.'"

"Why not give me the money at the door of the hospital?"

"Because I sha'n't have it in my pocket. I shall on leaving this place have in my purse only

the two pounds for Anna Harney. I shall take no more money about with me."

"While you are my companion, you mean."

"Exactly, that is what I mean," I replied, quietly.

"You think I'd rob you?"

"I think it better not to give you any temptation to do so."

"I'll trust you, ma'am. I always trust them as can take care for themselves. It's a bargain. When would you like to go?"

"How far is it?"

"About a mile and a half."

"Then I will meet you in front of the hospital in the course of half an hour, if you'll go outside and wait for me."

Having ascertained that this arrangement was acceptable to my visitor I dismissed him for the space of thirty minutes from attendance on me.

At the expiration of that time I left the hospital on foot, and found my companion under a gas-lamp at the corner of the street. It was already almost as dark as it would be in the course of the night, and a thin, cold, drizzling rain fell on the slippery pavement.

"Shan't we ride?" asked the man.

"No," I answered, "I prefer walking."

"It's wettish for a lady," he rejoined.

"I have thick boots and an umbrella," was my reply. And then I added, "Lead on, I'll follow you."

The man obeyed me, and turning across Southampton Street led me over Russell and Gordon Squares in the direction of Tottenham Court Road. My slight knowledge of town soon failed to inform me where I was; but I have no hesitation in saying that we penetrated to the west of Tottenham Court Road, by a street near Fitzroy Square. We then passed through an intricate series of courts, and back streets, and passages, till I could no more have set myself in the right direction for Marchioness Street without the aid of a magnetic needle than I could have commanded the British fleet. Every fifty yards as we progressed the man looked over his shoulder at me, and every time he did so I thought he looked more ill-favored than ever. I began to be afraid; but as there was no possibility of drawing back from my undertaking, courage did not desert me. My mind was too ill at ease for me to take good note of the places through which we passed; but dark as it was, and agitated as I was, I noticed that the streets were poorer, and dirtier, and the foot-passengers were humbler and more toil-worn in appearance, every two hundred yards we went. Once, indeed, we emerged from obscure and filthy haunts, and crossed over a broad and well-lighted street, and a magnificent square full of mansions; but soon we were again threading our way through noisy alleys, stumbling over open drains, and running against wretched, ragged children, squalling and quarreling in the gutters.

With my present knowledge of town, I should say that the man had led me into one of the very lowest and most disreputable districts of Marylebone, when he stopped short before a marine store-keeper's open shop in a narrow lane, and said, "Here we are. We're just at the place. You mayn't be frightened?"

"I am not frightened," I answered.

"Well, I only thought I'd tell you not to be,

for I'm going to take you up a queer-looking yard. Are you ready?"

"Quite."

Without another word the man turned sharp to his right, and gropped his way quickly up, what for the next minute seemed to me an interminable passage. Two or three hundred yards at least this passage was in length, and here and there for twenty yards or more it was covered over by the houses on either side. At these places it seemed like a subterranean passage. There was a lamp here and there for the convenience of the police at the entrance of the alley; but ere we stopped there was no light before us, and the last one behind us was at least fifty yards distant. Three times we encountered people descending this passage; when, so narrow was the way, I had to turn sideways, and push myself close up against the wall, in order to make room for the persons meeting us.

"That's all right," said the man, pausing at the end of the passage. "There's nothing to frighten you to-night. Only sometimes there's a row with the neighbors fighting here; and when there's a row in Cleaver's Rents, why it's a queer place for a lady."

As he spoke he pushed open a door, and led me into a house.

There was no light either in the entrance or on the staircase; and the man did not appear to have any intention of calling for one.

Up two flights of a narrow irregular staircase I followed him in the dark, regulating my pace by the sound of his steps, when he opened a door which admitted us to Anna Harney's dwelling.

The room was sufficiently large for a poor man's habitation; but in the fetid atmosphere, the dying cinder fire, the broken table, the dirty mattress and blankets on the floor in one corner of the room, the three rickety chairs, and the wick candle burning in a dim flame in a tin socket, it had unmistakable signs of the poverty and extreme squalor in which its inhabitant ordinarily dwelt.

"Oh, you've brought the lady?" said the woman I wanted to see, rising from one of the rickety chairs as I entered.

"Yes," said the man, "you needn't fear her."

"All right."

This interchange of words having taken place, Anna Harney with more civility of manner than I had anticipated receiving from her, said, "This is an awkward neighborhood for you to come to, ma'am. I would have waited on you, only poor people must be cautious sometimes. But now that you see my place, at least you don't want to ask me why I didn't come for the child. Be seated, ma'am."

"First, Mrs. Harney," I said, sitting down on one of the chairs, "let me pay you £2 for seeing me. If you will answer my questions fully and frankly, and to the best of your ability, I will give your friend £5 for you when he has conducted me back to Marchioness Street."

"Thank you, ma'am," the woman said, respectfully, taking up the two sovereigns which I laid on the table.

"I'll be on the staircase if you want me," observed the man, leaving the room.

As soon as he had left us, I addressed the woman, going straight to the business in hand.

"I want to learn some particulars about the child you left at the hospital. In the first place, was his name Alfred Jourdain?"

"That was the name he went by, ma'am."

"Ay, but don't evade me. Was that his right name?"

"I never heard him called by any other. I have heard his mother call him by that name, and she told me his father's name was Jourdain."

"What was the mother's name?"

"Ann Jourdain. While she lodged with me at least."

"She was your lodger. Are you not then the child's grandmother?"

"No, he was no relation to me whatever."

"Where did Ann Jourdain lodge with you?"

"In Grafton Street. I had a house there up to half a year since. I have dropped in the world. Poor people sometimes drop very fast. I had several young persons lodging with me."

"Ladies? young women?"

"Yes, ma'am. All of them."

"I need not ask you any thing about the character of your lodgers, I suppose?"

"You'd better not, ma'am," answered the woman, huskily, a flush crossing her face. "I could not say any thing about them you'd like to hear."

"Thank you, I understand you. How long was Ann Jourdain your lodger?"

"About a year and three months."

"Was the child an inmate of your house all that time?"

"No, he was out somewhere (I don't know where) at nurse. He came to mine about a fortnight before his mother died."

"What! she died!"

"Yes, she died just three months before I left Grafton Street."

"And you left Grafton Street about six months since?"

"About that time."

"Then Ann Jourdain died ninth months since?"

"About that time, and she was buried at Highgate by the lodgers. They subscribed to bury her."

"How long had she lodged with you?"

"About a year—rather more than a year. You may say a year and three months."

"She gained her living in the same way as the other young persons?"

The woman paused, and flushed again, as she answered by repeating my words. "Yes, she gained her living in the same way as the other young persons."

"Tell me what you know about her."

"She was quite a stranger to me when she came and took lodgings at my house. She knocked at the door just as any other stranger might, and asked if I had rooms to let. She saw the vacant rooms and took them at once, having the box containing her things brought in, at once and forthwith, from a cab into the house. I asked where she came from, but she wouldn't tell me. And as she paid a week's rent in advance I didn't ask any more questions. After she had been with me about nine months she fell ill, and though she kept about she was never herself again till she died. When she couldn't any longer afford to have the child out

at nurse, she asked me to let him join her in Grafton Street. And I agreed. So the child came; but she was taken worse suddenly, and died soon after he came."

"What was she like? Describe her to me."

"She was tall, and thin, and very delicate, not at all like a common girl. She had dark-blue eyes, and the finest lot of hair I ever saw on a girl's head. It was the nearest like polished gold to look at of any hair I ever saw."

I put my hand before my face as if I were considering.

"Now, Anna Harney, another point," I resumed, when I had recovered my self-possession.

"When you left Alfred Jourdain at the hospital he wore among other articles of clothing a linen shirt."

"He had a linen shirt, with edging on the lap-pets."

"Can you tell me any thing about that shirt, where it came from?"

"The child had it on when he came to Grafton Street. He had a set of fine shirts, and several other delicate things."

"What has become of them?"

The woman paused again and flushed as she had done twice before. "I parted with them," at length she answered.

"Sold them?"

"Pawned some and sold others."

I was silent for a minute.

"Ann Jourdain was in my debt when she died many pounds," continued the woman, justifying herself in an angry tone; "so I took what she left behind her. I intended to do well by the child, for he seemed a sharp little man, and promised to be useful. But he fell off all of a sudden."

"What other things did Ann Jourdain leave behind her?"

"Nothing of any value."

"You have nothing left of them, I suppose."

"Yes, I have one thing. I should have parted with that too, only I couldn't find any body to give a shilling for it. It's a brass locket, with a picture on each side."

"Let me see it."

The woman rose and went to her bed in the corner of the room, and having rummaged behind the mattress returned with a small oblong deal box in her hand. This box she opened with a key, and took from amidst the worthless rubbish it contained the locket of which she had spoken. It was a child's trinket, just such an article as might be purchased for 2d. any day in a toy-shop. A brass rim with a ring attached, two pieces of glass, and a little picture behind each glass, were the component parts of the ornament.

"I should like to have this," I said, quietly.

"What, ma'am, would you have me sell it to you, seeing it isn't my own?" observed the woman, sharply, referring, as I could well see, to the expression which crossed my face when she confessed she had sold the child's clothing.

"I did not mean to hurt your feelings."

"Pooh!" she retorted, bitterly, "I haven't any feelings."

"If you will let me take away this trinket," I said, "I'll give you £5 for it."

"You may take it."

"Did Ann Jourdain wear this round her neck?"

"Yes, she did. I took it off her when she was dead. In her last illness she was continually looking at it, holding it before her eyes. And the more she looked at it the more she cried. There now you know all about Ann Jourdain that I can tell you. So no more questions, ma'am."

She said this with a sudden change of tone, angrily and even fiercely.

"I wish to say nothing more about Ann Jourdain," I answered, quietly. "I will now leave you and go home. I will give the man £10 for you, £5 in payment for your information, and £5 for the trinket. You will then, with the two pounds I have already given you, have £12. Your husband (if I may call the man so) will have £2. Now with that sum can't you manage to move out of this wretched place, and fix yourselves in some reputable way of life? Do try to do so, Anna Harney!"

"Don't you dare to come Anna Harneying or Anna Carneying me!" exclaimed the woman, bursting into a fury of rage. "What do you mean by preaching to me in that sanctimonious way?"

She was still speaking with vociferous violence, when the door suddenly opened, and the man re-entered. "Hold hard, Anna! Tut, old lass," he said, "don't spoil the game now. Come, come, ma'am, be off—make haste, I'll follow!"

The tone, which might almost be called one of alarm, in which the man spoke, assured me that I had better obey him promptly. So I left the room without another word, he following me, and locking the door on the outside. Scarcely had he succeeded in achieving this when the enraged woman was heard within, kicking the door and shaking the lock with all her might, and making the house resound with her cries.

"Ah, ma'am," said the man, when we had quitted the house, and hurried down the long sewer of a passage, and stood once more in the narrow lane on which the marine-store shop opened, "you shouldn't have given her any advice! She has her good points, has Anna; but she can't stand advice. It goads her so, and drives her furious. It's a mercy she didn't strike you. You see it's her pride is cut, ma'am; for advice reminds of what she once was. You wouldn't think it, but she was the daughter of a clergyman, and I was once a master tradesman in Oxford Street. But we've dropped."

Dropped! Goodness, Heavens, they had dropped!

What a relief it was to be once more in the streets, however humble and dark and narrow! At least they were full of human figures passing to and fro, and human voices. Humble and wretched though they might be, I felt protection in the foot-passengers who jostled against me. The flaring gas-lamps, too, were cheerful. Even the gin-palaces at the street-corners appeared to have happiness in them. It seemed to me that I had spent an age instead of half an hour in the dismal, oppressive horrors of Cleaver's Rents. The carriages were whirling about the streets; and though the rain fell down fast on the sloppy pavement, I walked on with a sense of refreshment.

Having re-entered the hospital in Marchion-

ess Street, I dismissed my servant with his promised reward, and then, on looking on the clock in the hall of "Grace Temple," I found, to my surprise, that it was still only seven o'clock.

Retiring to my bedroom I shut myself in, and recalled all I had seen, and done, and heard within the last two hours.

Then the reaction came upon me. Then the transient gladness caused by my escape from the gloomy court, and my rapid passage home through the streets, passed away, and all the dreadful significance of the discovery I had just made rolled over. I took the locket from my pocket. How well I remembered that trinket which my dear grandfather had given to Etty on her birthday, when she was a little thing only six years old! The picture on one side was a portrait of myself, a profile cut out in black paper, and pasted on white. On the other side was her profile in a similar style of art. Under the one picture, on the white margin, was written "Tibby," and under the other "Etty." She used to wear that worthless make-believe ornament as a child, and she had worn it when on her death-bed, "looking at it, and crying the more she looked at it."

Had it indeed come to this? Was this the end of my long-cherished hope? the termination of my gladdening confidence? She would never come home now! Her home was not of this world. It was elsewhere. She had gone to it nine months before.

Again and again that night I heard my dear grandfather's solemn and pathetic injunction, "Whatever happens to you in life, whatever clouds may rise over you, whatever temptations you may have to resist, let nothing separate you from Etty. Cling to her; make her cling to you. Make every allowance for her. Never quarrel with her, whatever she may do. I think of your happiness more than hers when I say this. To quarrel with one's own blood is to cut through one's own heart. I know it."

"Dear, dear grandfather," I exclaimed, falling on my knees, "I tried to cling to Etty; indeed I did!"

Oh what would I not have given to have known then that which I afterward learned, that Etty was not dead, and that I had only been induced to think her so by a benevolent artifice practiced upon me by unknown friends!

CHAPTER VIII.

ETTY'S MOURNERS.

I PUT a black ribbon through Etty's locket, and put the ribbon over my neck; but I did not know for many a day the full weight of the sorrow that had come to me, together with the acquisition of the trinket. I had no need to put on mourning for Etty, for I had always worn black stuff and crape from the night of my flying from Laughton. "I will dress myself in black till Etty comes home," I had then said; and now I altered the words of my resolution to, "I will wear black forever, because Etty has gone home." I went to the porter of the north gate of Gray's Inn, and said to him, "There will never be a letter for me now; the friend I have so long hoped would write to me is dead."

She is with your little one in heaven." Spirit of love, that dwelt in the breast of that rude, lowly, untaught man, tell with fit words how he sorrowed when I was in sorrow! The next time I saw him sitting at his gate he was wearing the same black fold on his hat with which years before he had given expression to his regret for "the little 'un!"

I wrote to Mrs. Gurley, saying, "Etty is no more; she died several months ago, and I am mourning for her. Write to me, dear Mrs. Gurley. I am the matron of the Hospital for Sick Children in Marchioness Street. It was foolish of me not to have given you my right address before. But all is altered now; her shame and sufferings have ended, and my love is stronger for her than ever."

There still remained another duty for me to perform to dear Etty, and I did it without delay. I did not know in what part of the Highgate burial-ground she had been interred by her fellow-lodgers; but I ascertained from the keeper of the cemetery books that no memorial had been erected to her memory. So I selected a spot—a quiet corner on the top of the hill, screened on three sides by laurel, and fir, and copper-beech, and commanding in the front a view of the wide sweep of land under the foot of Highgate Hill, and a view of the mighty city where sin and virtue walk hand in hand—and there I erected a monumental stone bearing this inscription:

In Memory of
ETTY TREE,
and of
All who loved her and are no more,
This Stone
is erected by
TIBBY TREE.

I penned this inscription thinking of dear Etty's child and her fellow-lodgers, who had subscribed to meet the expenses of her funeral. They were in my mind when I wrote the line "All who loved her and are no more."

Then it occurred to me that Etty had left a considerable sum of money behind her, lying at the Laughton Bank. So I wrote to Mr. Gurley, requesting him to send me a check for that amount, which should be payable to me at the hands of the London correspondents of the Laughton Bank. When the check arrived it was for no less a sum than £400; and I took it to Lombard Street and obtained four notes on the Bank of England for £100 each; and these notes, having inclosed them in a letter, I dropped one night during a solitary ramble through the sleeping hospital into the contribution-box, that stood in the marble-floored hall of "Grace Temple," and had an aperture through the wall of the hospital into Marchioness Street; and there the notes were found five days afterward, to the great surprise and pleasure of the Committee. I felt satisfied that Etty, if she could have expressed a feeling on the subject, would have approved of that disposal of her property.

I tried to be brave and calm, and persistent in toil; but I could not succeed. Dr. Merriam urged—indeed he entreated—me to leave London for a few months; but I could not at first consent to do so. My hope of so many years'

silent growth was cut through at the roots, and had suddenly fallen withered and sapless; and with the death of my hope I experienced a loss of power—power of mind, and power of body, and spiritual power—a loss causing me to think seriously that ere another year the hospital would require a new matron.

One day, when I was sitting at this period of my life in a dull, despondent mood, a tap was made at my door, and a lady entered. At first I did not know her, and yet a feeling ran through me that I ought to know her. In another minute we were in each other's arms. "Oh, dear, dear, dear Mrs. Gurley!" I cried, beating her neck with my hands and kissing her, "I never thought to see you again. But, dear, dear friend, who are you in mourning for?" "God bless you, dear," she answered, "I couldn't help it. You mayn't be offended with me, though I am not of blood with you, and though it has set all Laughton talking. But I couldn't hear that poor dear Etty was no more without putting on black for her; and when I did know your address I couldn't keep happy without coming up to London to see you. So Gurley, dear man, said, 'Well, then, to make you easy, I'll take you up for a week to see our cousin Thatcher in Oxford Street.' And so, dear, we're in Oxford Street. You know it's quite an easy journey down to Laughton now, for we have fifty miles of railroad open." The next day Mr. Gurley came to call on me; and while he and his wife were in London she spent several hours of each day with me. We went to Highgate, and I showed her the memorial I had just erected to my dear sister; and we talked of her frequently and much, but never of her later life.

The sight of the Gurleys, so bright and so prosperous, and so little altered by time, greatly revived me; and after their departure I went to Clapton and staid a month with Mrs. Monk; after which recreation I found myself quite strong again and able to resume my hospital duties.

CHAPTER IX.

AN OLD FRIEND.

THE months passed on; and with the aid of my old, familiar, vulgar comforter, "duty," I still found much that was worth living for. When I thought of dying (and that is a subject on which every one ought to reflect—but healthily, and in no mere selfish spirit), I always terminated my meditations with recalling Dr. Merriam and Mrs. Monk, and one or two other kind friends, to part from whom forever would have pained me greatly. For me, therefore, to have been altogether unhappy would have been wickedness.

Spring, and summer, and autumn came again. It was October, just ten years after my midnight flight from Laughton, and just eleven months since I had ascertained the fact of my dear sister's death. The previous summer had seen me complete my thirty-sixth year; and I bore about me more signs of advancing years—or, if such an expression be preferable, of departed youth—than usually marks that age.

The tender mercies of our Heavenly Father are innumerable. In place of the hope that

Etty would return to my arms—the hope which had sustained me in so many trials, and had at length proved fallacious—there was given to me a joyful confidence that her evil behavior was forgiven by the Father in consideration of the Divine atonement. It is needless, it would be impossible, to show that this confidence was founded on any logical data—such as learned schoolmen would require. The Divine mercy, which gave me faith in the promises of religion, planted that confidence in me, and cherished it. It had no other source, no other support. Oh, you cold, fearless critics of the traditions that have come down to us—you who ask us to throw aside this doctrine as a fantastic imposition, and that doctrine as a scientific error, and a third doctrine as based on indisputable anachronism, until, robbed of its sacred clothing and familiar form, the Christian idea, of which you speak so loudly, is impalpable to us, who are only the weaklings of the earth—what could you have given me? what *can* you give any poor woman, struggling with sin and affliction, in exchange for such confidence? I don't presume to judge you. I daren't say that you are wrong, for God allows you to do as you do with noble intellect, which is his especial gift. But, I pray you, keep your labors unknown to us simple people. Write your profound treatises in Greek or Hebrew, so that if by chance they fall in our way we may understand not a word of them. Let us be poor weaklings! Leave us the darkness in which we can see clearly to the end, and give us not the light that will rob us of sight!

It was October; and I went to Highgate for a walk in the garden of the dead. On nearing the spot where Etty's memorial stood, I turned and surveyed the valley at my feet, and London in the distance, covered with a blue mist, into which the sun was flinging a warmth of gold. As, standing on the ground where her body lay

at rest, I looked upon the glorious city, in whose dark ways she had erred and fallen, I never felt a sweeter and fuller confidence than human life, with all its perplexities, tends to everlasting good.

Full of that joyful belief I turned to look at Etty's memorial, when I saw a person stationed by its side, and gazing at me with anxious tenderness. Oh, how well I remembered him, notwithstanding the alterations of nearly twelve years! That form so grand and royal! that face so commanding, and yet so childlike! those large dark eyes, so full of compassion! those sacred lips, that knew no guile!

I took his outstretched hands, and called him "Julian—dear Julian," for an instant forgetting the wide distance of time since we met.

And he said, in tones, soft, solemn, unutterably sweet, "Tibby, love for her who is in heaven has led us to this spot. She has brought us together. Let us be friends again, as we were in our happy childhood. Let us be old friends."

We left the ground marked by Etty's memorial, and walked down the hill together; and together we walked back into London.

He left me in Marchioness Street, at the door of the hospital, my last words to him being, "Yes, Julian, I will be your old friend again."

As I crossed over the hall of "Grace Temple" a troop of my little patients met me, and my heart was so full that I was forced to kiss and play with them.

"Oh, ma'am," said one of them, a thoughtful little girl she was, "have you seen any thing? You look so pleased and strange."

"My dear," I answered, "I have met in my walk a very old friend, whom I haven't seen for years, and that makes me very glad."

And as I said this, the whole troop of little patients raised their weak, thin, clamorous voices into a series of the most affecting cheers I have ever heard.

BOOK VI.

PART THE SECOND OF A WOMAN'S STORY:—BEING THE NARRATIVE OF OLIVE BLAKE'S REPENTANCE.

CHAPTER I.

ONLY A BABY.

THE anticipation of great gladness has been realized.

It is the height of the London season, and it is such a season that the oldest inhabitant of Mayfair can not remember its like. A new opera-house has been opened; a new company of French players are performing classic dramas in the St. James's Theatre; three foreign princes are in town; the new Prussian Ambassador is making the world stare with the splendor of his entertainments; the Royal Academy exhibits six unquestionably good pictures; a newly-discovered tribe has been brought over from Mexico, together with their ornaments, cooking utensils, and household gods; a European war is expected; there are rumors of a rising in Spain; a deputation has arrived at court from Delhi,

with an offering of diamonds for the British Crown; the ministry is tottering; and the funds are steadily going up.

The carriages pass under my windows with muffled roll, bearing the wealthy and high-born to grand entertainments, where the visitors will all thoroughly enjoy themselves after their various fashions, and none enjoy themselves more than the high and mighty satirists of the display, the music, the dresses, the conversation, and all the efforts made to please. Since pleasure is a pursuit with all, why is it so universally preached against? and by none preached at so bitterly as by those who ought to speak in its favor?

I hear the rumble of the chariots, and for a short five minutes I amuse myself with imagining the bright and festive scenes for which their occupants are bound. Then turning my head upon my pillow I say to myself, "But I don't

want to be with them. 'This is the happiest place, and that the best music for me.'

'The best music for me is the quick, short, light, easy breathing of a little creature, that lies by my side in a nest of its own; its head covered with a growth of nature's softest floss-silk, its features delicate as a biscuit-china toy, its wee folded hands frail as a butterfly's wings. Just now I listen intently, for the breathing is so faint as to be scarcely perceptible, *even* to my ear. But—now—just listen to that! To think of lungs so young having all that power in them! Why they chop up the air in tiny parts, just as a little dog from fairy-land might pant for pure frolic. The little creature is my baby—my first one; so I may be pardoned talking about it. I am so very proud of it. I have already begun to call it "my son."

"Aunt Wilby," I say to my dear aunt, who sits in the deepening twilight by my side, "how late is it?"

"Half past eight, dear—would you like me to order lights?"

"No, no! I enjoy the dusk. If there were a breath of air stirring in the square I would ask you to open the Æolian harps. Baby would like the music. Isn't he breathing sweetly? He is *really* an unusually fine boy?"

"A very fine boy," says my aunt, emphatically.

She has told me so twenty times within the last twenty hours; she'll have to repeat the assurance as often within the next twenty.

"I never thought its head would be covered with hair," I continued.

"It has an unusual head of hair."

"I suppose there's no harm in its having so much."

"Harm? Dear me, no; it's a great ornament."

"So I say; not that it stands in need of the adornment."

"It promises to be very well-looking."

"It is well-looking already, aunt."

"Of course it is, dear."

"I really should like to have the lamp brought from the next room, just for an instant, so that I may look at it."

The nurse is summoned for my gratification from the next room; and she enters, bearing a lamp, carefully shaded.

"Pray be careful, nurse; don't let the light fall on my child's eyes. What a beauty! Oh, aunt, do look! There, nurse, take the lamp away."

Nurse obeys; and for a moment I am afraid that my son has been disturbed. But the fear is groundless. He's as fast asleep as ever.

"Arthur will come in soon, on his way down to the House, aunt?"

"Why, Olive, he was here only three hours since."

"Yes; but he'll like to see the boy again before he goes to bed. I wonder how the ministry will get on to-night."

My aunt laughs. "Let the poor ministry alone. Mr. Petersham will have his peerage quite soon enough to gratify your maternal pride."

"Indeed, Aunt Wilby, your deafness is better," I retort. "Your new physician is a clever man. You hear things before they are said."

"Not before they are thought," rejoins my dear aunt, laughing again.

"Oh, dear, don't laugh so, you'll wake him."

"Don't be alarmed. My lord sleeps soundly; what title shall we give my little lord, Olive?"

"You're very foolish."

"What say you, baby, to Baron Byfield, or Baron Petersham of Byfield? No, that won't do. The Baron Byfield is the title. Arthur Petersham, Baron Byfield!"

"Hush, there he is!" I say, as my quick ear detects the sound of a carriage stopping before my door, on the thick carpet of straw that in my honor covers one side of Grosvenor Square, and thirty yards of a street leading into it.

"Who? Dr. Andover?"

"No; Arthur."

In another minute my husband enters, and comes to my side. He is excited, and hesitates rather more than usual.

"I-I c-can't st-stop many minutes, Olive, for I must be in the House. Th-ther-e w-will be a division, and the ministry can't stand. I-its im-impossible they can stand; we are sure of a majority of twenty."

He kisses me both before and after saying this; and then he proceeds to give me the particulars of a conversation he has just had with the leaders of the opposition. When he has finished these interesting communications, he goes round to the baby's nest, and after looking at it silently for more than a minute says, "God bless you, little Baron Byfield!"

"Don't put such ambitious thoughts into his head, Arthur," I say.

"G-good-n-night, Olive," he answers, "good-night. If all goes well our boy will be the second Baron Byfield. Good-night."

The door has closed upon him, and I am once again listening to the delicate breathing of my newly-invented baby. The moon rises over the square and throws its rays into my open window, enabling me to see my darling as he lies in his nest, breathing fast and slow by turns, unconscious that his future dignity may depend on the proceedings of that night.

He is only a baby.

But he is the heir of an honored name and vast wealth! Yet more; for him generations of prudent, cunning, highly cultivated men have labored, and plotted, and hoped!

The ambitions of dead men centre in him!

CHAPTER II.

MONEY.

SUCH happiness had come upon me, within three months of the fright I experienced from the irruption of "the mad girl!" It was a short time; but it was long enough for the mad girl to have dropped completely from my thoughts. Her anguish under the apprehension of being separated from her babe was no affair of mine. It never for one instant recurred to me, as I lay with my treasure breathing by my side. "The mad girl" was simply one of the "people"—that vast, vague, fluctuating assemblage of human interest, that I surveyed from my carriage windows, read of in the newspapers, comforted through the medium of "charitable institu-

tions," and was benevolent to—from a distance. I was not heartless, but only thoughtless. I wished to do my duty to my neighbors, and sometimes I was very earnest in the wish; but somehow, in action, my charity consisted in giving away money that I didn't want, and leaving to others the trouble that would have been distasteful to a lady of fashion.

My husband voted with his party on the night already mentioned; but the Cabinet was not broken up. The premier stood his ground till the prorogation of Parliament gave him security for another five or six months. With the opening of the following year, however, a new Administration was formed, and the privilege of governing the country fell into fresh hands. There was the usual scramble for places. Patriots must have their reward—their means of doing good to their country and their relatives. Mr. Arthur Byfield Petersham had helped the victors, and asked for the recognition of his, and his father's, and his grandfather's services. He did not ask for post or pension, power or patronage. All that he sought was the privilege of sitting among the fathers of the land, the right to style himself "noble," and a promise on the part of his fellow-countrymen to hold one of his descendants in each of the succeeding generations noble also.

This was Arthur Byfield Petersham's ambition, and he achieved it.

He became Baron Byfield, and my baby was his heir.

Although my father had begun life a poor City clerk, he was cadet of a good Irish house; and my mother was the daughter of a family that for centuries had held a place among "the gentle" of the North country. I was therefore by no means of a descent that could be emphatically styled plebeian. Sprung, however, from the middle rank of life, and reared by a father the simplicity of whose manners was equal to the dignity and politeness of his mind, I had always in my girlhood regarded the aristocracy of the country as separated from me by a wide interval. Partly also from the influence of the literature in which I took greatest pleasure, partly from genuine sympathy with the pursuits of men of letters and artists (who only occasionally belong by birth to the highest ranks of society), and partly without a doubt from a generous pride in my father's career, as well as a poetic sentiment that made me feel strongly for the weak, I had in my early days at Fulham professed to identify myself with "the people." It may well make my readers laugh; but I used to brag a little about being "only a banker's daughter," and to play the part of "a child of the people." In theory I was a terrible republican, writing sonnets to the oppressed, and aiming a hot fire of scathing denunciations at kings and tyrants. Titles—empty titles (I never spoke of titles, when I was fourteen years old, without calling them *empty*) I held in lively contempt; and even in the last days of my dear father's life I remember being perplexed how he could so strongly approve of the ambition cherished by his friend and partner. And afterward, the strong probability that Mr. Arthur Petersham would sooner or later acquire a peerage had seemed to me as the only weighty reason why I should not care to be his wife.

Of course my republicanism was a very dainty affair, tinted with *couleur de rose*, and delicately scented, like the curtains of my boudoir. It was mere sweetmeat and sugar-plum politics, but all the same for that I was earnest in it, believing it the strongest meat of social science.

And here was Olive Blake, the prophetess of liberalism, the advocate of advanced opinions, and the scorner of "empty titles," taking her place in the world as a peeress, and exulting in the "nobility" of "her boy!"

We came up to town with the opening of the season, anxious to begin life again in our new characters, with our new dignity!

At certain periods of his life my husband had been a zealous "business man," taking an amount of personal toil in the conduct of the affairs of "Petersham and Blake" that few men of his rank would have consented to undergo. And now that he was exalted to the chamber of our hereditary noblesse, he had no intention of relinquishing his commercial avocations. Business with him was not only a pursuit, it was poetry. Worshipping money with the ardor of a true Plutoerat, he idealized it as at the same time the emblem, the language, and the essence of power. Had he pressed the *premier* for a place in the Cabinet he might unquestionably have obtained one; but the labors of office would in his estimation have been by no means compensated by the influence and transient *éclat* of an office-holder. The only power that he valued was that which was his by virtue of his financial position. His peerage was a public recognition of that position; and therefore he prized it, as a distinction and a star of honor; but far more he held it in esteem, because it gave him rank among capitalists, placing him at the head of the London bankers, and imparting to him increased weight in that select fraternity of traffickers in money, who may be termed the state-financiers of Europe.

His father's view had been, that on achieving elevation to the peerage his son should gradually disassociate himself from commerce, and covering the coffers won in Lombard Street with heraldic blazoury, should wear with the composure of "his order" the honors of a British noble. But Lord Byfield had very different plans for himself. He had become the acknowledged captain of London bankers; he would not rest till he had made himself in like manner the leader of the state-financiers of Europe. He would also do yet more in the narrow field of English society than he had yet accomplished. Steadily pursuing his father's policy of using his money as an engine for acquiring political influence, he (without ever annexing himself to any Cabinet) would make himself an arbiter between parties, and raise and throw down statesmen as he thought right. Higher rank should be given him in the peerage. And from high to low Great Britain should look to him, the money-lord, as one of the chief powers of the commonwealth. He would teach the proudest aristocracy in Europe a lesson that they had never yet rightly learned, because they had never been rightly taught it—a lesson worthy to be inculcated—the lesson that far beyond the rivalry of virtue, and valor, and wisdom *money is omnipotent!*

This was my husband's purpose. A base doc-

trine, surely, was that which he wished to enunciate, and indelibly impress on the national character; but base as it was, he would have taught the lesson grandly. Knowing him well as I do now, his meanness and uncleanness—I must still in justice own that I can not imagine any man better qualified for effectively enforcing so hateful a view of life.

Polite, cultivated, acute, and eminently a social being, devoid of petty prejudices, and possessed even to a dangerous degree of a faculty to discern, appreciate, and sympathize with the secret feelings of his fellow-creatures, Lord Byfield was a dark and secretive man, never, with all his easy frankness, showing the world the cards of his hand, or even letting it be known what game he was playing. His ordinary companions regarded him as nothing more than a well-bred man of the world—too prudent to wreck or in any way injure the magnificent fortune he had inherited, but in no way possessed of the strength of intellect or purpose requisite for achieving success against the obstacles of adversity. His peerage was rightly regarded by the world as a natural consequence of his father's exertions; but the world was singularly in error when it judged the holder of that peerage to be nothing more than a quiet, indolent, inoffensive, unambitious, commonplace gentleman.

It was with exquisite pleasure that I found myself not wed to a characterless man. Until my union with him, and indeed for several months afterward, I had concurred in the world's estimate of his capacity and disposition; and the worst features of my life's prospect were the discomforts I anticipated experiencing from his want of aim. It was not till the time drew near for me to be a mother that he revealed to me the strength and purpose of his mind. Women are loyal to power, in whatever form it manifests itself, and their weakness is impressed by it just in proportion as it is discovered where it was least expected. My husband quickly saw that I had learned to respect him, and he proceeded to strengthen his influence over me by all the arts of fascination; his mastery of which gave him a power over women, which his ordinary and even insignificant appearance, his disfigured face, and his impeded utterance would seem to have precluded him from obtaining.

Naturally his view of life became my view of life—his aim my aim. I lived in a higher, clearer atmosphere before; but my flight had been unsteady, in the pursuit first of one object, and then of another. He caught me in his firm grasp, and bringing me down to his range of observation, turned my eyes to *his* object, and inspired me with a determination to follow it. Where two persons are brought together, the weaker will succumb to the stronger. Neither in loftiness of aspiration, nor purity of intention, nor unselfishness, lies the power that decides which of the two is to prevail over the other. The question is one of steady, persistent resolution, and he who has the most of it will be victor.

Perhaps if that had not occurred which it is my intention to tell in the present book, I might still in course of years have burst asunder the fetters of bondage in which he held me; but I am of a decided opinion that such would not have been the case. If I had lived with him for five years, as happily and as intimately as it at one time

seemed sure I should live with him, I believe that with my soul as well as my body I should have been his willing slave to the end. For the man had a strange and truly fearful power. He made me love him, even while he caused me to feel that I was growing less lovable in my own heart.

He gave me *confidence*, and that is the praise sweetest to a wife. If at first I did not like what he revealed to me—still *he* had *shown* it, it was moreover part of him, and so I loved it.

Therefore, with all my heart, and soul, and strength, I resolved to be a brilliant and admired woman of the world. To use all my quickness of parts, and learning (for I had some), and accomplishments, in his service. To study and practice the arts of pleasing, so as to be “a power in his hand,” in order that the world might come round me, and I might influence it as he bade me. He was far from the highest order of man. That I well knew. But he was a man—a strong man; and I would be his *wife*—loving and faithful; the swiftest and surest servant he had ever commanded.

When we came to London at the opening of the season it was not to re-enter our house in Grosvenor Square. *Lord Byfield* had arranged to make his first campaign in the capital under his new title with suitable splendor. The largest mansion in Piccadilly had therefore been purchased by him (as soon as he saw his elevation was near at hand), and all that lavish expenditure in the course of eight months could do toward converting it into one of the most superb residences in town had been accomplished. Our staff of servants was increased; the horses were concentrated from our country places, and we had a stud for royalty to envy; our equipages were new, and built for the express purpose of being admired; and as soon as we had taken up our quarters opposite the Green Park we were giving a series of entertainments. “The dandies will sneer at our splendor,” said Lord Byfield, “and accuse me of gilding my gold; but as it is a real rose that I paint, they’ll forgive me.”

And so we set about the great business of our lives—to teach people that Money Is Omnipotent!

CHAPTER III.

DEATH.

CHILDREN and kindred are the forms Satan often assumes to tempt those he would make his victims. To serve his wife and benefit his child a man will frequently do *on a system* that which he would scorn to do *once* for the purpose of serving *himself*. It was thus with me. In deliberately taking for myself a low object, I justified myself by the consideration that I was about to advance the interests of my husband and child.

It was so sweet to think as baby lay upon my breast that I was going to *help* him—to do work, and to make sacrifices, the result of which would be his exaltation when he should have reached manhood. As his little hands patted me and beat me, and his blue eyes looked up at me with a smile ere their soft lids closed, or as he pressed his lips together and throwing back his head upon my arms laughed, and crowed, in answer to the endearing nonsense of my foolish tongue, I felt that I had found a work in life—one worthy

task—to be a mother, careless of every interest, present or future, that would not contribute to his prosperity. “Baby,” I used to say, looking at the treasure on my lap, “you won’t know for many days how your mother has surrendered herself to your service—how her dress, and wit, and grace, and control of temper, and amiability, and cunning, and wife, are simply your servants. Mamma means to be a loyal wife, obedient and intelligent; but wifely duty to her is only another name for child’s interest.”

But this bliss of wickedness lasted only for a few short months. It was like a dream, in its course persuading the dreamer that its incidents cover whole years, and in its conclusion showing him that its manifold intricate mutations of actors, and positions, and feelings, were crowded within a few brief minutes. When Jonah lay in languid luxury under the shade of his palm-erist, he rejoiced with great joy, and every moment of the “exceeding gladness” appeared to him a life of conscious comfort. Its refreshing coolness was the source and limit of his sensations, and beyond the sensations of the moment he did not care to look. The tree had been ever there, and would be ever there—and so would he. His wandering by land and by sea, his past toil and anguish, were unheeded. He forgot how mysteriously the Lord God had prepared the tree, and made it to come over him, that it might be a shadow over his head, and deliver him from his grief. The sorrow and the mercy had both passed from his mind. He never looked beyond the branches, or remembered the heat that tortured him ere they were, or dreaded the heat to come when they should have perished. The tree was there—and he was dreaming under it. That was enough, while the dream lasted. But when the worm smote the tree that it withered, and the vehement east wind rose, and the fierce sun beat on Jonah, till his fever made him say, “It is better for me to die than to live!” he then saw that the leafy canopy, given him so bountifully and taken from him so wisely, far from having roots firmly fixed in the past, and being made for permanence, had only existed a few hours. “The tree,” said the Lord, “for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it to grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night.”

As Jonah dreamed blissfully under his tree, so centuries afterward the foolish rich man built his noble mansion, and vowed that he would be merry for many years, little thinking, poor fool, that his many years would be shorter than the day and night in which Jonah enjoyed himself.

That first brilliant season came to an end, and we left town. My husband was well and in good spirits; I was proud, and happy, and confident; my babe every day and every hour manifested some fresh beauty or sign of health and intelligence, and troops of friends never wearied with praising me. Our season had been a triumph.

That was in July.

Three months later—just as Nature’s green woods were taking the yellow sere, and the dry red leaves were being blown over the bleak, dry common, or lay in heaps along the lanes—the fresh cool covering of my worldliness fell, even like Jonah’s, and I was left to exclaim, “It is better for me to die than to live!”

My little baby is dead.

It fell ill shortly after we left London for Burstead House, with a malady for which the physicians could assign no cause. Week after week it grew worse. Doctors upon doctors posted down from London, but they could not save it; for the same Hand which smote Jonah’s tree, causing it to wither, smote my baby, so that it should die. It was only a year and three months old when it died. Two days before it seemed to me as though I had never been without it; two days afterward I could scarce believe that it had lived more than a few weeks. The little baby which came up in one year and perished in another is to me now as though it had “come up in a night and perished in a night.”

My dream is over—and the dream was not an entire life, but only a dream of a few brief minutes.

I am sitting alone in a bedroom of Burstead House—a silent, quiet room; a room I have not left all day save when from time to time I have passed into an inner chamber where my little baby lies in its coffin, with its fair, shadowy, tiny face enveloped in linen, delicately wrought—where it looks something as it did on the day when it was christened, only purer, fairer, more sacred! It breathed then and was warm, and I loved to touch it; it is quite still and silent now, and I dare only to look at it, and even that only for a few moments at a time.

It is a dull, clouded afternoon. The rain does not fall; but sombre volumes of vapor move close to the park, over which the wind, buffeting all things fitfully and wailing harshly, drives the red leaves. I watch them driven—like flights of small birds over the water; I watch them chased in the distance—fine and small as a swarm of insects—whirled over the fences of the deer-park, and over the trim lawn of the ornamental garden, close under the windows. There is no sun to set this afternoon. But the sombre masses of vapor grow blacker and blacker, and the red leaves become specks of ebony, till soon they are indistinguishable—on the gravel of the terraces, and the carpet-grass surrounding the flower-beds, as well as in the distance over the cold mirror of the lake, and over the deer-park.

My husband is in town, where business has detained him for several days. He has not seen baby since its death; but he will arrive to-night to see it, ere I take my last look of it, and cover it with flowers, and say to it, “Good-by, baby—good-by forever!”

It is darker and darker. The wind is still pursuing the red leaves, buffeting them to and fro in the open places, or swirling them up avenues, or causing them to rise and twist round the oak stems and then shoot up like spirits of water. But the leaves, not less than the wind, are invisible to the game-keeper walking over the park, as well as to me standing at the window of my silent room.

I am quite alone. No one may disturb me.

After it has grown quite dark I light a taper, and enter the solemn inner chamber where little baby lies in its coffin, all ready for its funeral, save that I and my husband have not taken our last looks, and covered it with flowers.

My solitary candle is sufficient to show me its shadowy, dream-like face, its waxen lips, its golden hair, its little hands.

“Oh, baby!” I say, “your little face was

once full of smiles, with a meaning of its own for every smile; and your little lips that had used to say 'mamma,' were wont, ere they could form a word, to close upon me so firmly. Shall I never dress your golden hair again? Little hands—you once beat against my breast, with little nails quite scratching the skin of it, while your blue eyes, starting with gladness, turned round as they looked at me."

Then I leave it, with the taper burning at its head, and I walk to and fro in the darkness of the large outer room for many minutes, thinking of all my wicked worldly ambition for my child, of which that still, silent picture of angelic infancy is all that remains to me. When I return to the lighted chamber it is to wring my hands and say, "Oh, God!—and that is the child we said should be a mighty one of the earth! Ah, God, pardon me! Help me!—I shall go mad!"

I utter those words aloud, and the last of them striking on my own ear as I speak it, leads my thoughts into another channel, and causes me for the first time for more than a year to recall the poor mad girl who came to me in Grosvenor Street, and told me that cruel men were plotting to separate her from her child. Her baby had smiled on her, and laughed at her, and crowded at her. Its lips had drained warm nourishment from her breast, its little hands meanwhile beating it and scratching the skin of it. She had felt all this; but I had not pitied her. How then could I ask God to pity me?

CHAPTER IV.

CORRECTION.

THE recollection of Ety Tree having at length come back to me was not speedily to depart from my mind. When my husband arrived at Burstead House, and stood with me by the side of our dead child, the poor mad girl seemed to me to rise up before us, and mutely implore me to render her justice. It was the same in church during next day, when we and a few friends and our servants were present at the funeral of "my boy." The vision of the beautiful and miserable creature haunted me. At night I lay awake thinking of her; and when toward the morning I dozed off into a semblance of slumber, it was only to start up as she appeared to me in a dream.

I had never troubled myself about her parting words. At the time of their utterance they were considered by me merely as an outpouring of insolence as well as deceit. Afterward, on the arrival of my husband, I held them to be the words of insanity; and, viewed in either light, I had soon forgot them. But now, clear and pathetic as when they left her lips, they penetrated to my hidden depths of feeling. "Oh, poor lady, from the bottom of my heart I pity you! Last time I was here I asked you to pity me. It is now my turn to pity. I have been a wicked, vain, heartless girl; but indeed you wrong me, and in his own time God will prove me innocent of what you lay to my charge."

Truly her turn had come to pity me.

Why was it that, in spite of my undisturbed belief in my husband's honor, a presentiment would for minutes together possess me that the

concluding prophecy of her parting address would one day be fulfilled.

My husband remained a month with me at Burstead House, when it was arranged that he should leave me for a visit to an adjoining county, and meet me again in about three weeks' time at my dear old villa at Fulham, where I hoped to enjoy several weeks of retirement.

"Arthur," I said to him, on the day previous to his departure from Burstead House, "can you tell me what has become of that poor girl Ety Tree and her child?"

I said this with a great effort, both because the subject was a painful one, and because I felt a shame in never having before put the question to my husband.

He seemed disturbed at my inquiry, and hesitated to an unusual degree as he replied, "D—dear m—me, no, Olive. What has put her into your mind?"

"It is not unnatural that I should think of her. She had a child."

"W—well, d—dear?"

"I should like to help that child, Arthur; I should be happy if I could do so. She spoke to me about it a few months before I was blessed with our little one. Perhaps the jealousy of maternal affection, even at that date, causing me to wince at the thought of what my child would be if her mad words were true, had an influence upon me that I feel pain to reflect upon—urged me, in short, to speak to her with cruelty when at my hands at least she rather deserved commiseration. Any how, the death of my dear child has brought her babe to my mind, and I should very much like to take her and it under my protection. Was her babe a boy, Arthur?"

"Y—yes; a—e boy."

"You do not disapprove my plan?"

"F—far f—from it, dear Olive," he answered. "It is like your own gentle self to entertain such a thought."

"You will then let me know where she is?"

"Kn—know wh—where she is, my dear girl? I can not tell you. How came you to think I could?"

Now that Lord Byfield so questioned me, I was surprised at finding how slight my grounds were for assuming that Ety Tree was in a confinement suited to her malady, and that my husband was at least cognizant of the retreat in which she had been placed.

"As I am wrong in my supposition, you'll think me a very unreasonable person for having entertained it," I answered. "Since the poor girl disturbed me in Grosvenor Square I have scarcely thought of her six times; but when her story was still new to me, I conceived that of course the victim of so painful a hallucination would not be permitted to be at large. I knew that she had no relations to take possession of her, and therefore my mind had taken an impression that you, acting for Sir George Watchit, would provide for her comfort, and security, and remedial treatment. Indeed, if you had asked me at any time within the last twelve months where I imagined the poor girl to be who had caused me so much annoyance, I should have answered, 'In some private lunatic asylum, where you have placed her, with directions for her to be treated with every possible indulgence.'"

"A—and f—far from being an unreasonable

answer, Olive," rejoined Lord Byfield, "it would have been one supported by your knowledge of what I did for the girl at Nice, and would also have been countenanced by your sense of propriety and fitness. But all the same for that, the answer, I regret to say it, would have been erroneous."

"Indeed!"

"I—immediately a—after I learned of the poor creature's visits to our house in Grosvenor Square, I caused a search to be made for her in every quarter, for the express purpose of placing her under salutary restraint. The course I should have adopted to her would have been precisely that which your hypothetical answer has sketched."

"And did you find her?"

"I—I e—could not even get a trace of her. With all the best agents that a liberal expenditure of money could procure for my assistance, I have not been able to get a glimpse either of her or her footsteps. I am not, as you are well aware, to be easily turned aside from a purpose which I have thoroughly at heart; and I am still occupied in a search that most other men would have given up as useless. Many years must pass before I will relinquish my endeavors to serve poor Watchit in this particular."

"He is then acquainted with every thing that has transpired?"

"O—o—f course, every thing. A—and o—only last mail I had to write to him that I was apparently as far as ever from being able to give him satisfactory information as to his child and the mother. I expect to see him in London in the course of the next year. By—the-by, I heard a short time since in the city a good account of the young man whom this unfortunate girl was engaged to marry."

"What, Julian Gower?"

"E—exactly. Th—those m—mines in South America have, under his management, turned out much better than was anticipated. Two of those first worked, which were heavy sources of loss to the Company, had to be relinquished; but two gold mines, which were subsequently purchased at Mr. Gower's advice, have proved most lucrative to the workers. He has been back in England for some time, and is closely connected with men who are very likely to help him to make a large fortune."

"Arthur," I said, earnestly, "do not relax your generous efforts to discover this poor woman. Disordered as her intellect is on one point, she is insane on no other; and her rare beauty marks her out as a prey for the vicious. We have a duty to perform to her. Her ruin was the immediate work of *your* friend. If I had not directed your attention to her, possibly she would at this time be the wife of an honorable man. Indeed, in a certain way her downfall was *my* work."

"D—don't l—let such a painful thought gain influence over you," Lord Byfield returned, gravely; adding, in his most reassuring manner, "But for the rest, Olive, rely on me. As soon as I can discover the child I shall be most glad to see you extend protection to it."

Thus the subject was left.

The next day Lord Byfield departed on his visit, and I was left at Burstead House to ponder on my past life, to search the secrets of my

own heart, and pray God of his mercy to make my bereavement a means of good to myself and others!

In my retirement at Burstead my dear aunt was my only companion. Her placid cheerfulness was the only kind of society I could then endure; and during the three weeks that I remained in Hampshire, before rejoining Lord Byfield at Fulham, I derived great comfort from her presence.

My mind was in a state of morbid excitement—at least, so my physicians assured me, though I concealed from them much of my disquiet, and all its principal causes. My chronic sleeplessness, which no narcotic could overcome, they attributed to nerves overwrought by grief for my dead child. My fever, my constant depression, and a lassitude that made me, for the first time in my life, understand the full meaning of *weariness*, were attributed to the same cause; and without a doubt the doctors' diagnosis was not altogether incorrect.

Mental perturbation was the source of my bodily suffering.

And God alone, who of his infinite mercy afflicted me, knows what I then suffered.

Was it not enough for me to have lost my darling, my only babe—the blood of my blood, the life of my life? It was far from enough. It was only one of the weights (and the least of them) that lay heavy on my soul. A voice within me that I could not silence told me that the death of my child was a direct visitation of the Almighty, to punish me for my worldliness—my forgetfulness of Him. The mother who has lost a child can form a faint conception of my agony. Let her imagine the child, taken by the Angel of Death from her loving embrace, to have been killed by her own hand—yes, *killed by her own hand!* Let her imagine *that*, and she will know something of my horror when I daily stood in Burstead church, and heard a voice say, "Woman, *your sin* has brought *death* on your own child!"

When the voice said this I inwardly asked God for mercy. And my prayer was heard; but the mercy was shown to me in this wise: "Woman!" said the same awful voice, "not seventeen months since a frail, erring sister implored you to pity her, and you answered her with scorn. You were worse than deaf to her cry. Now ask God to pity you, and learn what it is to cry aloud to Him in your trouble, and to find Him deaf!"

That was my punishment *by day*.

In the long, weary *nights* my punishment was for me to be ever falling into a conscious torpor (not sleep)—to think that my babe was purring and moving in tranquil warmth by my side—to turn to embrace it, and then to find it as it was when I looked at it for the last time beneath the flowers. Over and over again was this torture repeated every night. Each time I fell into the conscious torpor I was sure (as I could be certain of any thing) that my child was living and lying close to me; and each time I turned to fondle it I found it shadowy and still, and awful to look upon—even as I had left it in the sacred chureh.

But the nightly scourging of my soul was not yet at an end. When this horrible, ghastly illusion had been repeated again and again, until my mind was nearly crazed, I used to throw my

head back upon my pillow and implore the Ruler of the universe to save me from madness. Then came the sharpest blow of the Avenger's rod. Then, and not till then, silent and calm, and miserably beautiful, a delicate girl, with sorrow in her earnest eyes and contrition in her tender face, stood before me. She never spoke. It was another voice that spoke. "See! she, like you, is separated from her child!"

Thus it was that I was taught to pity an erring sister.

CHAPTER V.

A WELCOME HOME.

WITH reason my dear aunt Wilby was alarmed for me.

I found out afterward that the physician in whom, of my several medical attendants, she had the greatest confidence, told her that unless something could be effected to rouse me from the fearful condition into which I had fallen, there were grounds for apprehending an evil even worse than my death—the alienation of my reason.

On receiving this terrible intimation she wrote to my husband that she should induce me to leave Burstead House and proceed to Fulham without delay, and she trusted that he would meet us there.

In accordance with this arrangement we quitted Hampshire a few days earlier than we had intended, and journeyed up toward town. It was a wise and lucky step, for events were transpiring which demanded my presence in London. My physician had expressed his desire to procure for me a violent revulsion of feeling. His prescription was a good one; and it was about to be carried out by circumstances as little anticipated by myself as by him.

The rod of the Divine displeasure had struck me, and I had kissed it. I had been humbled—effectually humbled; and had my spiritual welfare been the only object held in view by the Power who had chastened me, I can believe that he would not have added to me yet another humiliating affliction. But for the happiness of others it was necessary that the utter vileness—the meanness and uncleanness—of that master whom I had impiously undertaken to serve should be yet more plainly manifested.

The facts to which I must draw attention still cause me such pain to reflect upon, that I may be excused if I hurry over them, and if I refer the reader for the particulars of one portion of my punishment to those published archives in which they are recorded.

My journey up to town was marked by one occurrence which had a great effect upon me at the time, and gave me a prevision of fresh calamity. At one of the posting-houses on the road I obtained a copy of the *Times*, and read in it the announcement of the death of Sir George Watchit, K.B., in British India. He had died suddenly (said the paper) of Asiatic cholera, just as he was preparing to return to England. Poor man! I thought I knew well the motive he had in making such preparations for a return to his native land. But I was wrong.

What was the effect which this announce-

ment had on me? It was not regret; for I had only seen Sir George Watchit once or twice in the whole course of my life, and all that I knew of him (apart from his brilliant conduct as a soldier) made me hold him in a sentiment closely resembling detestation. And yet when I read the account of his death I regarded it as a private and individual calamity to myself, rather than as a loss to the public. I had a sense that the death of Etty Tree's seducer had taken a power from me—that a crisis in my life was approaching when I should need him, and require certain information that he of all men was ere his death best qualified to give me. I had not existing before my mind, even in the most vague manner, any drama in which, were he alive, he could be useful to me. Yet a presentiment, almost amounting in force to a logical conviction, told me that the days were fast drawing nigh when I should say, "Would that Sir George Watchit were alive, that I might consult with him!" It was passing strange that I should feel this for a person of whom I knew so little that was good—so much that was ill!

On arriving at Fulham I found Lord Byfield ready to receive me. I was so prostrated by the fatigue of traveling that I had to be carried rather than led into the villa. My appearance was doubtless harrowing to Lord Byfield, and possibly he felt some compunction in having left me in Hampshire in so perilous a state of health; but there was that in his face which I could not attribute to concern for me, although I had not any reason to question the sincerity of the affection and admiration he always expressed for me. Such a ghastly aspect of defeat and anguish I had never before seen in mortal face; and it impressed me all the more because I knew, however deeply he might be stirred, he was just the man to show very little of what he endured.

"What is the matter, Arthur?" I inquired, as soon as we were without the presence of a third person.

"N—nothing, n—nothing, Olive, except that I have been very fagged with business. A—and t—this afternoon I've had a bad chill; but I have sent for my physician to see me to-night."

"Something particular has happened, Lord Byfield. I see it in your countenance."

"W—well s—something has transpired to annoy me, which, following so immediately on the news of poor Watchit's death, has quite upset me. But I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. To-night you'll have enough to do to get rest after your fatiguing journey. Moreover I can't stay with you ten minutes. My carriage is ready, and I must be driving back to town."

"Going back to town! At this hour?" I said.

"Y—yes, I—I sh—shall sleep in Piccadilly. Brownson is there waiting for me now. I have especial business. I came from town to welcome you, but I must return immediately."

He staid with me a few minutes longer, vainly endeavoring to make me feel at my ease, and then he took his departure.

I saw him once again, after an interval of two days; and then I never saw him till (years afterward) he stood before me, a craven culprit imploring me to shelter him from ignominy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REVELATION.

THREE hours before Lord Byfield welcomed me on the entrance-steps of Fulham Villa he had been figuring in a crowded law-court as a witness in the atrocious cause of Pryce *vs.* Le-compton. I need not recount the particulars of that abominable exhibition of perfidy and vice. If any woman is ignorant of it, let her ask her father, or brother, or husband to get the printed reports, and the answer that will meet her request will justify me for declining to give an abstract of the proceedings.

I have only to concern myself with Lord Byfield's part in those transactions; and of that part I will speak in the fewest possible words. It is enough to say that, under cross-examination on a point that came up incidentally in that trial, his lordship was compelled to admit facts proving to demonstration that while I was down in Hampshire nursing my dying child he was in town carrying on a vile intrigue with a friend's wife; and further, that even at the time during which our babe lay dead in Burstead House he was so amusing himself. The counsel rightly and boldly (but, oh so *cruelly* to me!) drew Lord Byfield's attention to the dates of two occurrences which he admitted, and asked if his recent private affliction, with which "society" was familiar through the public papers, had not visited him at a period just between those two dates. In court Lord Byfield declared on his honor that, though his infant son lay dead at the time mentioned, the counsel's inference was as wrong as it was odious, for he was unaware of the fatal termination of his child's illness at the time of the last occurrence to which the learned counsel directed attention. It was not necessary for Lord Byfield to have made any reply to the barrister's question; but, to save his reputation from one black stigma, he volunteered this statement. *And I, his wife, knew that the statement was utterly false!*

I said nothing to my aunt that evening. She was not observant of trifling matters, and the unexpected departure of Lord Byfield from Fulham immediately after my return drew from her hardly one expression of astonishment. The intelligence of that day's scene in Westminster Hall was already an affair of gossip with the servants. Their faces told me that they were occupied with an unusual excitement, and I can readily believe that my countenance revealed to them that I had cause for uneasiness beyond my physical debility and sorrow for my child. But my dear aunt Wilby detected nothing in them to arouse suspicion in her mind; and though she thought me more than usually nervous, she attributed my restlessness and eager irritability of manner to the fatigue I had suffered in my journey.

I dined at eight o'clock, with the intention of retiring to rest early.

As soon as my almost untasted dinner was at an end Dr. Clarges was announced, the kind man having, at my request, come from town to see how I had borne my journey. As a man of society and a physician he had undergone a long training to command his countenance, but he failed to conceal from me that he too knew that which he desired to hide from me.

"Dr. Clarges," I said, when he had felt my

pulse, and, after making a few professional inquiries, was about to leave me, "what is it that makes you, as well as my servants, look at me so strangely?"

"My dear Lady Byfield," he answered, "you are nervous. You should control yourself. You may not let your imagination overpower your judgment. Sometimes it is the duty of a physician to act the part of a moral teacher. It is my duty to do so now."

He said this very kindly as well as gravely, but he did not impose upon me.

"Doctor," I answered, gravely, "I know as well as you can tell me the peril that my over-excited mind subjects me to. I know what that sorrowful and solemn voice of yours means. You fear for my reason, and, doctor, you have good grounds for your terrible apprehensions. I have heard it said that the insane are familiar with the first symptoms of their malady long before their dearest friends discern them. Experience tells me that such is the case. For nights past I have recognized the fearful fact that my reason is tottering; and, doctor, if something be not speedily done to stay the morbid influences that tyrannize over me, it will be your sad office to treat me as one who is mentally afflicted."

I saw that these words had a powerful effect upon him. He paused in his movement toward the door when I commenced, and as I proceeded he pierced me with a most peculiar scrutiny—a gaze so full of commiseration and sympathy that it did not frighten me, although I knew it was taking note of every sign of my countenance that could support my awful apprehensions for the stability of my mind.

"Lady Byfield," he said, returning to his seat, "I won't leave you quite yet. We must talk together a little longer."

"You know too well, doctor," I continued, "the fidelity of nervous susceptibilities to laugh at me as though I were a child. Beyond the agony I have undergone in Hampshire, in nursing my child, whom you vainly endeavored to save by the prompt exercise of your benevolent art, I have been weighed down by a consciousness of the ill of my past life, and by an overwhelming sense of an urgent calamity, making a midnight gloom of the near future. A vague prevision of impending catastrophe has been one source of my unrest. *I am sure* that that dreaded calamity has fallen upon me. Why has Lord Byfield left me suddenly on this night of all the nights of our life? Why do my servants eye me with pity and curiosity? Why do *you* thus scrutinize me?"

"Lady Byfield," said the doctor, "if I were to tell you that circumstances have transpired which are likely to exercise an injurious influence on Lord Byfield's public position, and that he is greatly disturbed thereat, how would you receive my intelligence?"

"As a relief—just as far as the information should be complete. Dear doctor, tell me *all* you know. You know my attachment to you for your kind attention years since to my father, and for your loving care to my child. You know that I would not trick you into doing that which would injure one of your patients—even though I be that patient. Tell me all, and I shall sleep soundly. I shall need no opiate but the intelligence."

Dr. Clarges was a wise, tender, and courageous man.

"All that I can tell you, Lady Byfield," he said, "is in the evening papers. One of them I have in my pocket, and I will let you have it on certain conditions. It is better that you should know now what you will be sure to learn to-morrow; for I am with you to watch the effect it has over you."

"What are your conditions?"

"First, when I give the paper into your hand and leave the room, you take sixty drops of your cordial tincture in a glass of cold water, having yourself measured the drops. Then you may read the report of a trial which you will have no difficulty in finding in the columns. That done (and here comes my second condition), you are to lock the paper up in one of the drawers of that table. Then (here is my third condition) you ring for your maid, and go straight to bed. What say you to these conditions?"

"I promise to fulfill them."

"And now, Lady Byfield," the doctor said, with increased gravity, rising as he spoke, "attend to me. Remember *what you owe to me*. If the contents of that paper should have any very prejudicial effect on your health, society will hold me accountable for it. I take a heavy—I am afraid I should say an *immoral*—responsibility in showing you, thus unauthorized, this account of proceedings which must greatly disturb you. But I take the risk on myself, in the belief that I am acting mercifully to you. Now, then, bear in mind the interests of your father's old friend."

"You will not leave the house, dear doctor?" I said.

"No; I will sit for an hour or so by the library fire. I'll tell the butler to bring me a glass of that Burgundy I used to drink here years ago, when I was a young man looking for patients, and your kind father gave me his friendship. And when I have had a cup of coffee after my wine, in all probability your maid will come and tell me that you wish to speak to me before going to sleep."

"Thank you, my very dear friend," I said.

"God bless you, dear," he said, omitting my title. I noticed the omission, and was greatly affected by it.

"Oh, my dear friend," I observed, "you do right to speak so to me."

These words pointed out to him the singularity of his last address—a singularity which, till I spoke, he had not observed.

"My dear," he answered, with a smile, "my white head renders an apology unnecessary."

And with that the doctor left me.

Ere two hours had elapsed I summoned the doctor to my bedroom, and on his entering I raised my head from my pillow to say,

"Dear Doctor Clarges, feel my pulse."

He did so, and scarcely had my wrist rested in his hand when I saw a smile of satisfaction in his humane face.

"That is well!" he said. "You will need no opiate to-night."

"No, I shall not need it. Your medicine has cured me. My awful dreams will not return."

"And, doctor," I continued, after half a minute's silence, "you must be my friend and adviser again. You are my trustee. I shall be-

gin again to call you guardian. The good white head will think for me. Will it not?"

"Heaven protect you, Olive!" replied my old friend.

"Sleep in the house to-night, dear doctor," I added. "I am sure I shall go to tranquil rest; but should I wake up, I shall feel happier if I know you are under my roof."

And then, when he had pressed my hand warmly, he left me for a second time.

I did not disturb Dr. Clarges in the night. A profound slumber came over me, and ere I woke, just as the gray dawn began to creep through the cedars in the garden, I had a vision of the "mad girl," unlike the visions of previous nights. Patient, gentle, beautiful as ever, but with a new tenderness of look for me, she stood at the foot of my bed saying, "Olive Blake, you will help me, and love me;" and as I started in my bed and threw out my arms to embrace her I woke, and found myself alone.

CHAPTER VII.

PARTED FOREVER.

DURING the two next days, while all London and all the country were busy discussing the new *esclandre*, I heard nothing of Lord Byfield's movements. On the third day he wrote me a brief letter, soliciting me to give him an interview. Dr. Clarges was at Fulham when this note arrived, and I consulted with him ere I sent back to Lord Byfield by his messenger a note to the effect that I did not wish again to see him, that I was resolved never again to live with him as his wife, but that if he wished to give me the pain of bidding me "farewell" in person, I would give him an interview during the afternoon of the next day in the presence of my old friend and guardian, Dr. Clarges. I thought this note would preclude him from appearing at Fulham. But I was mistaken. Ere the close of the next afternoon he came.

He did not know how completely his degrading influence over me had vanished. Subdued in manner, pale, and with his dejection rendered more impressive by the mourning he wore for our child, he approached me respectfully, as a stranger might. I looked at him, as many months before I had regarded "the mad girl;" and like her, he stopped at a distance from me.

He was the first to speak. He implored me to put a generous construction on the events which so justly incensed me. He even wanted me to believe that his grief, running into distraction—his mad despair at witnessing the mysterious decay of our child—had been one cause of his vile and unnatural wickedness. He tried to rekindle within my breast the dead embers of that fire of worldly ambition which he had lit. He even dared to remind me that we might reasonably hope for more children to perpetuate our wealth and miserable dignity. Every chord of my breast he touched, by pathetic allusion, or subtle flattery, or base suggestion of personal interest, but no tone or note could his skillful handling win from it.

At length he paused, and I said, coldly and firmly, as if I were passing sentence on him:

"You have come here, Lord Byfield, to serve

your own selfish ends, careless how much your presence might pain me, so long as you won the stakes at a cruel game. But so completely severed am I from you, that I do not even feel insulted by seeing you in this room. The anguish and the humiliation of this interview are yours, not mine. My note of yesterday communicated to you my resolution for the future, as far as our unfortunate marriage tie is concerned. You wished to hear me repeat my resolution by word of mouth, thinking that to see you would make me falter. You are mistaken. You have dared to suggest that a future still lies before us, in which we might play together your game of unhallowed ambition. You even dared to hint that we might yet have children to hand your disgraced name to posterity. Listen to my answer. This is your punishment. You shall never have a child to bear your basely won honors. I know not what power the law may give you to demand my return to your roof, nor what penalty I may undergo for refusing to obey such an order. But I am resolved never again to bear your title or your name. From this time you will be a stranger to me. Dr. Clarges, my father's dear friend and my guardian, is here to protect me in your presence."

Vulgar in his vices and crimes, Lord Byfield was vulgar in nothing else.

He was not a man to turn on the woman he had wronged with violence of language.

Bowing to Dr. Clarges, he said, "Sir, I recognize the justice and dignity of all that has passed the lips of this lady, who has put herself under your protection. I have, Sir, only to assure you that I will never by any act disturb the lady I have already so deeply wronged, or venture to exert any power with which I am invested for her discomfort."

Having said this, he quietly, and with a dignity of bearing which I could not do otherwise than respect, departed.

As the wheels of his carriage rolling down the drive reached my ear, I said, "Now, Dr. Clarges, I am no longer Lady Byfield. Once more I am Olive Blake of Fulham Villa."

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW PURPOSE.

My health of mind and body returned to me rapidly; for bereaved as I was of my child, I had now a new purpose in life—a good work to accomplish; and I was soon busy devising measures for effecting that which the voice of my heart assured me it was in my power to achieve.

"And now, Dr. Clarges," I said, when I had told my physician and guardian all the story of my wedded life, "you have heard the narrative of Olive Blake's *sin* and *repentance*. You must now aid her in a work of *atonement*. I rely on you to assist me."

"What would you be doing, Olive?"

"I must discover Etty Tree. 'The mad girl' and her child must live under my protection. If she *be mad*, the more need has she of my care. If she *be wicked*, the more need has she of a Christian woman's sympathy. But, doctor, the more I reflect upon the past, the more convinced I am she is neither the one nor the other. *The man who has wronged me was capable of wronging her*. She said that he was her husband, and *I believe her*!"

"My dear young friend," said the doctor, seriously, "do you see all that that belief implies?"

"I do, Dr. Clarges," I answered, a shudder running through me as I spoke—"I do see all it implies. And if my dear baby were alive I fear that I should be so wicked as still to wish to think the worst of this miserable Etty Tree."

The doctor was silent.

"The work of my life shall be to seek her out through the wide world. If she is steeped in wickedness, my tears shall win her to repentance. If she is sick in mind, I, who so recently almost knew the anguish of alienated reason, will cherish her. If she has been wronged, by God's help I will do her justice."

"Olive Blake," said Dr. Clarges, "it is noble work you propose to yourself. I will help you to the best of my power."

BOOK VII.

SUSPICION:—BEING PART THE FOURTH OF MISS TABITHA TREE'S NOTE-BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

FRIENDSHIP, AND SOMETHING MORE.

JULIAN and I became friends again. Fully occupied as manager of an important bank, and as a civil engineer of extensive practice, he still found time to be a frequent caller in Marchioness Street. Truthful, earnest, and simple as ever, the world had changed him only in giving him greater experience, knowledge, and confidence. He was to me the Julian of years long since in the old "corn country." Business was with him a noble pursuit, followed in accordance with high principles; and of the ample wealth it brought him a large portion was devoted to works of un-

seen benevolence. Only one feature of his life made me sad—he had not married. I speak the simple truth when I say that this fact filled me at first with lively sorrow; but ere long I was taught to look on this, as on every other circumstance which was a consequence of his own will, with thankfulness.

We became friends again, and more than friends.

Reverting to his life in America, and the effect which the melancholy intelligence of Etty's departure from Laughton had had upon him, he told me that which greatly surprised and affected me. In her last terrible communication to him Etty not only told him that she could not

be his wife, but also informed him of a discovery she had made without my knowledge; at least, *she said* her discovery was effected without my knowledge or suspicion. With a pathetic appeal to him to pardon her faithlessness and cruelty, she said that she should never have made him a good wife; that she had never really loved him, further than having her childish imagination taught by me to magnify his fine qualities. And then, in mad, impetuous terms, she told him the secret of my life, which I had been at such pains to conceal from her, and which I would have died rather than have revealed to him. "Oh, Julian!" she concluded that terrible letter which I had seen her in the act of penning, "what a curse my beauty has been to you and to her, as well as myself! If it had not been for that, you would have loved her, and would be ere long a happy husband, and she would be saved from the gloom which only those women experience who love throughout life without return. I know well the past can not be undone. In that is my chief agony."

Julian did not tell me this till he had for several months been in the habit of calling on me in Marchioness Street. It was not till he had, with exquisite delicacy of consideration for my feelings, caused me to perceive that he hoped I might, in spite of the past, consent one day to be his wife. It was not till I had begged him not to cherish such a wish, that as a last resource of argument (brought forward to induce me to change my resolution of remaining single till the end of my life) he told me what had been familiar to him for years. "Tibby," he said, "I know you love—that you loved me, long ere I could appreciate your unselfish devotion, even if I had suspected it. Ety herself was my informant. Oh, let the words of the sister we have both loved so dearly prevail on you to alter your decision! Listen to her last words (penned after you had heard her voice for the last time)—they sanction our marriage. You can not disregard them. They are to you her dying request. Obey them—in mercy to me, obey them!"

This was the story of his love for me. After years of toil had healed the wound inflicted by Ety's misbehavior, and he was able again to look out cheerfully upon the future, he had resolved never to marry any one but me. He had several times gone down to "the corn country"—to Farnham Cobb, and Beachey, and Langhton—to seek intelligence of me; but unable to gain a clue to my retreat, he had relinquished his search in a confidence that, if Providence thought it right for him to have sweet domestic joys, the care of a wife, and the endearments of children, he would one day be brought to me. "Oh, Tibby!" he said, pitifully, "you can not be so cruel and ungenerous as to make the sorrow of years gone-by a reason for subjecting me to still more acute sorrow in the years to come."

This appeal overcame me, and I said, "Julian, I love you as I ever did, with all the strength of a heart that yearns for love. You know it. When my heart first became your servant you were poorer even than myself, and now you are rich and powerful I feel for you no otherwise. Whether I be your wife or not, I shall always love you more than my own life, more than—"

I tried to speak further, but I could not. My dear old grandfather, and the child Ety,

with her wayward mirth, came before my eyes, and the garden of the old College, and the gallant boy Julian, so strong, and generous, and tender-hearted, so bold of heart and light of tongue! they all came before me, and I could only sob out to the noblest man this mighty England of ours ever gave birth to, "I'll be a good wife to you, Julian. If God will help me in my prosperity as he has comforted me in my sorrow—I will be a good wife to you."

So I consented to be Julian's wife; but we agreed not to marry till two full years had elapsed from the time when we met, after our long separation, before Ety's memorial at Highgate.

And my anticipations of the gladness before me in the coming days were without a cloud to darken my serene cheerfulness. It was no pain to me to think of my dear sister. Shame, anger, humiliation, were gone—I had outlived them; and that strong confidence in the Divine love, of which I have already spoken, caused me to forget all the terrible features of her death, enabling me to think of her as one of those who are forgiven and are happy forever.

Marchioness Street no longer seemed to me dingy and full of gloom. I had no longer to count the minutes on the clock, in the hope that some petty daily duty would come swiftly and win me from brooding over my wretchedness. Dr. Merrioun smiled his satisfaction with my altered looks, and the gentlemen of the Committee and the lady visitors of the hospital spoke among themselves of my changed appearance. The nurses told me, after my marriage, that I used to sing snatches of old songs in those days, not only to amuse the sick children, but as I went about the hospital by myself, up the staircases, and along the wide passages of "The Doctor" and "Grace Temple." But I think that in this the kind-hearted women must have been amusing themselves with an exercise of the imagination. It is so very ridiculous and improbable a thing that the matron of a hospital should sing about the staircases!

But my lightness of heart by no means disinclined me to continue the discharge of those duties which had once been my comforters. I rose and worked just as heretofore, not during the two years intervening between my restoration to Julian and my marriage I never read a single novel; I was so happy that I did not need to be taken out of myself.

In place of my old moderate indulgence in novel-reading, I allowed myself the recreation of longer evening walks in the neighborhood of Marchioness Street, in Gray's Inn Gardens, and Guildford Street, and Russell Square. After dark, when the wind was blowing over the dry pavements, I used to trip and race along, thinking to myself of all that was going to happen. My step had altered very much; there was a spring in the sole of my foot, such as I had never in all my life experienced before; doubtless I had it in my childhood, but the rutted lanes of the corn country were not such springy exercising-ground as the pavements round dear old Marchioness Street.

One bright starlight evening shortly before my marriage I was out for a trot after a hard day's work, when I had a singular *rencontre* with a lady I had met before, which I may as well mention here. I had been for a turn in Gray's Inn

Gardens. But somehow the gardens had lately become too grave and monotonous for me; I preferred the bright gas-jets over the hucksters' stalls in Red Lion Street and the brilliantly illuminated shops in Lamb's thoroughfare. So bidding my old friend the porter of the north gate farewell, I left the gardens, and darted about the pavements, as quick a little body as was to be seen in black habiliments that evening in the law neighborhood. I am sure I couldn't recall my exact course, but I know I was passing along Guildford Street, when I had the sensation that I was followed by a tall lady, who, like me, wore a veil, and for pedestrian achievements had certainly the advantage over me in respect of length of limb. I was positive that she was tracking me; she had kept close upon my heels all round Russell Square, and now, as I walked past the gate of the Foundling Hospital, and looked back over my shoulder, the same slight figure was behind me.

I turned to the left in quiet Caroline Street, and, slackening pace, said to myself, "Well, if she wishes to speak to me she can catch me here."

I was just entering Mecklenburgh Square, when, sure enough, the figure came close up to me and addressed me by name.

"Good-evening, Miss Tree. I saw you crossing Russell Square, and I have followed you, half resolved to address you, and half fearing to offend you by intruding on the solitude of your evening ramble."

"Oh, pray do not apologize," I answered; "what do you wish to say to me?"

"Do you not remember me?"

"No, indeed I do not. What is your name?"

"Nay, I did not say you knew my name."

"Well," I replied, laughing slightly, "it is so dark here that I really can not recognize your black veil."

Her voice, however, told me that she was a lady, and there was something in it which made me think I ought to know it.

"You are going to be married, I hear," continued the lady.

"How did you learn that?" I said, starting, for I had kept my approaching marriage a profound secret, even from the Committee, and I knew that Julian had exercised the same reserve to his friends.

"Never mind how I learned it: you *are* going to be married shortly."

I remained silent.

"You have resigned your situation at the Hospital for Sick Children. To-morrow a new matron will arrive for you to introduce her to the duties of her office before you yourself leave."

"Why do you tell me what I know so well, and what you might learn from any one of the hospital Committee?"

"To show you that I am acquainted with your movements," was her answer, made with the greatest possible composure.

"But these movements of mine, as you call them, are no mystery to any one acquainted with that institution, which is a public one. Possibly you subscribe to the charity yourself."

"I do. But I know more about your movements."

"Indeed?" I replied, inquiringly, for my curiosity was roused; and eccentric as this strange

lady's address was, her voice satisfied me that she was a lady, and that in conversing with her I was guilty of no imprudence that Julian would disapprove.

"You are going to live in that beautiful place, 'The Cedars,' on Highgate Hill. It will be a change to you after Marchioness Street. You'll be mistress of a noble residence. Why its last occupant was a peeress!"

"You *do* know something of my 'movements,'" I said, with another start, "and more than I care the public to know."

"But I am not one of the public."

"You are a friend of my future husband's?" I asked.

"Come, you are guilty, by your own admission," she rejoined, with a laugh: and then she added, "Yes, I am your future husband's friend. I wish him well; but he knows no more of me than you do. You are a fortunate woman. You will be envied."

"Why?"

"Why! is not Julian Gower known to be a rich man?"

"I am prepared for that taunt from the world," I said, with heat. "He is a very rich man. And if the world likes, it may say he bought me from the Committee. For his sake I would readily be called mercenary, or stigmatized by any other odious epithet."

"No, Miss Tree, the world won't call you mercenary; it will content itself with saying that your husband is a fool. Yours will be a love match. But you should not be severe on women who make mercenary alliances. Men and women are very differently placed with regard to matrimony. To a man, marriage is only a field for the exercise of his affections; to a woman, it is both a field for the development of affection, and the only career open for her ambition. A man may advance himself in life by business, speculation, labor of body, labor of brain. If he fail once, he may begin again, and yet win a prize in life; but when a woman is once married she has lost all control over her career, as far as worldly prosperity is concerned. It is as much a woman's place to look out for her interests in marriage as it is a man's place to strive for advancement in his profession. Indeed, to marry is a girl's profession, marriage is her vocation; and whether she succeed in life or not depends altogether on the one selection she makes of a husband. You should then be charitable to girls who display a certain amount of worldly prudence in the one great act of business, which is to decide their worldly position for them."

She said all this with so much quiet earnestness that I was impressed by it. It struck me that she was possibly touching on some past personal experiences of which I had rudely reminded her.

"I would judge no one uncharitably," I said.

"I am *sure* you would not!" she said, kindly.

"You deserve to be happy, and I think you will be happy."

She seemed to be considering within herself for a few moments, when she added, in a tone that caused me to remember her words long afterward, "You *will* be happy if you have children; but a childless wife no husband can really love. May you never learn the truth of my

words! Mr. Gower is a man of high principle, and under any circumstances he will show you much consideration and tenderness; but if you should not have children, you'll have reason to regret that you did not remain till old age the matron of the Marchioness Street Hospital."

As she said this she changed the direction in which she was standing, and the street lamp under which she stood revealed to me the features of a face I remembered. She had drawn up her dark veil above her mouth, and, looking under the folds, I saw the delicate, composed, thoughtful countenance of the lady I had spoken with four years before in Hyde Park.

"I have seen you, and spoken with you once before," I said.

"You have—in Hyde Park," she answered, without any ruffle of her tranquillity.

"You know me and my history," I said. "Let me know you too. I feel we ought to know each other."

"I knew you," she answered, "and your history, long before the day I took you fainting in my arms, and conveyed you in my carriage from Hyde Park to Marchioness Street. I had then watched you for many a day. Do not resent my care for you. Indeed there is no person of your sex who, more sincerely than I do, wishes for your well-being. But you may not know me yet. Perhaps one day we may be friends, but not yet. Good-night!"

I saw tears in her eyes as I looked up into them under the street lamp and said "Good-night! I thank you for your good wishes. If we may not be friends in this world, let us look forward to meeting in another life."

"God bless you, dear!" she answered, softly,

"I will pray that we may meet there."

As she moved away I did not feel it right to follow her.

In another minute she had turned into Guildford Street and was out of my sight, her quiet departure causing the streets to appear very still and tranquil. It was as though a hush had come over the night traffic.

It was but a step to Marchioness Street; and when I stood upon the steps of Grace Temple, looking up and down the antique way, the grim, deserted mansions had a more solemn aspect than they had worn for many a night.

"Poor lady!" I said. "And I am so happy!"

CHAPTER II.

A WEDDING WITHOUT ORANGE-BLOSSOMS.

I DID my utmost to keep the approach of my marriage a secret; not that I was ashamed of myself for intending to become a wife at so advanced an age as thirty-eight years, but because the circumstances of my history made me still unduly sensitive of the curiosity of my neighbors. So I told no one of the step I was about to take till a few days before the event, when I wrote to Mrs. Gurley, informing her of my determination; and to Mrs. Monk, of Clapton, asking her for her prayers for my happiness. Those epistles written, I next let Dr. Merriam into my confidence.

"I am going to say good-by to Marchioness Street next Wednesday, Dr. Merriam," I said.

Looking at me with a queering, curious expression in his kind face, the doctor answered, "I hope you won't altogether desert us. You'll come and see us occasionally—eh?"

"There will never a week pass over without my spending several hours here, unless I am ill," I answered.

"Then you are not going far out of town?"

Whereupon I communicated to him the great intelligence.

"Aha! aha! Miss Tree, this is an unexpected piece of news! Now then the secret is out! 'Tis no longer a marvel that you should walk about the hospital singing!" he answered, with unaffected merriment; and then, suddenly checking himself, he added, with touching earnestness, "My dear Miss Tree, from the depths of my heart I trust that you may be as happy as you deserve, and that God may reward you for your motherly care of the sick poor children of this institution by giving you babes of your own!"

"Dear, dear doctor," I said, "speak just as kindly to me, but don't speak so seriously to me, or you will make me cry, and that would trouble me, for I want to ask a favor of you."

And so near was I to breaking down as it was, that I had to put my hands over my eyes, and bite my lips quite hard, and count ten before I could go on.

"And what is the favor?" inquired the doctor.

"I am going to be married very quietly, doctor," I answered. "Julian will call here at nine o'clock on Wednesday morning, and we shall breakfast in my sitting-room; and after breakfast we shall walk up the street, just as if we were going for an airing and a shopping, but we shall at first go no further than the Square church, where we shall be married quite privately. On coming out of church we shall find Julian's carriage waiting at the door for us, and he will take me with him to 'The Cedars' at Highgate, where we are going to live. Now, doctor, can you spare the time to come to the church at ten o'clock, and sign your name in the register as a witness of the ceremony? I have written to Mrs. Monk, of Clapton, to ask her to attend also, and be the other witness; but otherwise I shall invite no one to the church."

"My dear Miss Tree," replied the doctor, "it will give me great pleasure to witness your marriage, and you may rely on my punctual attendance. If the greatest lady in Mayfair sends for me next Wednesday I won't attend to her summons till I have seen you married. But tell me, who is Julian?"

"Mr. Gower," I answered.

"What!" cried the doctor, with an exclamation of surprise. "Mr. Julian Gower, the civil engineer?"

"Why, yes; who else should it be?"

"This is the romance of real life!" cried the doctor, emphatically.

And then I told Dr. Merriam all about Julian Gower—how he and I had lived in our childhood like brother and sister in the happy "corn country;" how I had loved him then, when he was quite unaware of my passionate devotion to him; how he had gone away to America, ignorant that my heart beat first for him, and only cared in a less degree for other persons; how after his departure for South America we lived separated

for many long, long years; how during all the long years of my service in the hospital I had never laid my head on my pillow without praying Heaven to protect him, wherever he might be, whatever he might be doing, and whatever suffering; how we finally met near the resting-place of a dear dead friend, and once more joined hand to hand; how he, grown rich, and powerful, and honored, was the same simple, generous, and merciful man that he had ever been; and how he had learned to love me, and was going to exalt me to be his wife! And when I had told the doctor all this, I did that which I was sure from the first he would make me do—I began to cry. And I had to hurry from the doctor for fear of annoying himself and myself with “a scene.”

The night before my marriage was a very happy one, but full of solemn thoughts, grave reflections, tender and pathetic recollections. I spent the evening by myself, reading in that book which had been my comfortable light when I traveled in dark places, offering thanks to my heavenly Father for all his wonderful mercies vouchsafed to me, and earnestly begging him to still guard my uprising and my downlying with paternal care. When the wards were at rest, and none in the hospital (save myself and two or three very sick children, and the nurses on night duty) were awake, I walked, for the last time at that still point of the four-and-twenty hours, through the spacious halls, and ceiled and painted rooms, and dark passages of “The Doctor” and “Grace Temple.” The moon rained down her soft light through the ornamented windows, touching with a delicate pencil the outlines of the Graces and Venuses on the dimmed panes, and flinging dark shadows athwart the effulgence of the spacious galleries. Memories of children who had come to those wards in sickness and left them in health, and of others who had breathed their last prayers on the hospital beds, ere the merciful emissaries of Death took their souls to heaven—faces chastened by suffering, flawed by vice, sharpened by sickness—memories of such strange, sad, fearful, weird, pathetic faces rose before and around me.

But I went to bed very happy, and my sleep had many pleasant dreams!

In the morning I was up early, and dressed myself—not in mourning, but in a light muslin walking-dress, and a white muslin bonnet, trimmed with a few bright flowers and a spray of green. I would not be married in black—nay I could not. At nine o'clock Julian came; and after reading together in the Bible, and saying a short prayer on our knees together, we had coffee, and in much excitement recognized to ourselves that the time of our hope was drawing nigh.

When the clock struck ten I had my arm in Julian's, and he led me down the broad staircase of “Grace Temple” without any one seeming to observe us—and across the spacious marble hall of “Grace Temple,” also without encountering nurses, or servants, or spectators of any kind. When we were at the door my heart fluttered very fast, and I thought I must return to take another look at my darlings in the wards; but it was too late to do so, for Julian had opened the outer door of “Grace Temple,” and in another moment we were in Marchioness Street, where the sun was shining brightly, making mil-

lions of little diamonds of the last remains of the morning's haze.

The church to which we were bound was within sight of the door of “Grace Temple.” It was the church that I had regularly attended during my ten years' residence in Marchioness Street, and stood in the dingy, deserted square at the end of the street—the square which I have already spoken of as being given up to forlorn third-rate lodging-houses and boarding-houses, even as Marchioness Street is given up to charitable objects. But though Julian and I had not to walk more than a hundred yards to the church that distance was long enough for me—excited as I was—to observe a great alteration in the quietude of the quarter. Such an unusual number of people were stirring in Marchioness Street, all walking in the same direction—toward the church. I could not make it out. Then I began to be aware that glances were turned to me, and I discerned signs of emotion and pleasure in the faces that looked at me. And looking forward, I saw quite a crowd of people round the church door.

“Why, Julian,” I said, “there must be something going forward at the church. What can it be? There's quite a commotion.”

“I declare, Tibby,” answered Julian, with a voice of great agitation, “I believe, in spite of all our precautions to keep our intention secret, the people have learned our purpose, and are bent on doing us some honor.”

“Don't be so *absurd*, Julian,” I answered, quite sharply, for really for just half a second I thought he was joking, and I did not exactly like him to jest at so serious a crisis of our lives.

We had just time to exchange these words when we arrived at the church door, and found it quite blocked up. Fortunately, Dr. Merriion met us, and said, “Here, come round to the vestry door, and you'll be admitted there. Mrs. Monk is there waiting for you. They have kept the vestry entrance all clear for you.”

“But, dear Dr. Merriion,” I asked, catching hold of the physician's arm, “what is the matter? What are they doing? It can't be about us?”

“Keep yourself calm, my dear,” answered the doctor. “There's quite a scene in the church.”

On entering the vestry Mrs. Monk came forward and took me into her arms; and when I had kissed her, another lady—a stranger to me—came and offered me congratulations on my approaching happiness. She was Mrs. Merriion, the doctor's wife.

While I was exchanging a few sentences with these ladies, Julian left me for half a minute, and looking through the glass of the inner door of the vestry surveyed the interior of the church, in which there was literally not a vacant place. Every pew and every bench was crowded, and the aisles were thronged with people pressing against each other.

Julian had at all times a very powerful voice. It could be very soft and gentle; but its ordinary tone was very full and sonorous, and when exerted to its utmost he could overpower the uproar of any multitude.

When he had surveyed the interior of the church through the glass door, he turned round and exclaimed with a shout of thunder—“Good Heavens! the church is full of poor people. Ev-

ery corner is crammed. They are all poor people, and they're all her friends!"

He addressed these words to Dr. Merriion, quite unconscious of the stentorian voice with which he uttered them. Never shall I forget the magnificent exultation of those words, and of that triumphant smile which crossed my husband's face as he uttered them.

"Hush! my dear Sir," said Dr. Merriion, "command yourself, or you will upset Miss Tree's composure."

After the lapse of a minute or two I stood in the church before the officiating clergyman. I was told afterward that the ceremony all went off well, and that I acted my part to perfection. I was glad to hear that, the more so as I myself heeded nothing of what went forward. I did not distinguish one of the clergyman's words—whether he addressed us, or offered up the solemn prayers of the marriage service, it was all the same. I noticed nothing, remembered nothing. I could not think of Julian, or of my future, or of the solemn purpose which had brought me to the church. The one vision present to my mind, whether I stood or whether I knelt, was that of the dense, countless multitude of human faces that were turned to me as I passed through the vestry door and entered the church. My head and my heart were so full of that it was impossible for me to think of any thing else. I only recovered my consciousness when I found myself again with Mrs. Monk, and Mrs. Merriion, and Julian, and the doctor, and the officiating clergyman, and I heard myself addressed on all sides as Mrs. Gower. I looked at my finger and found a wedding-ring upon it. So that was all right. And then I looked at my husband, and he said, "You behaved beautifully, Tibby."

When we had all put our signatures in due form in the register, the question was debated how we could best effect our exit from the church.

"You mayn't," said Julian, decidedly, expressing an opinion in which I heartily concurred, "slip out by the vestry door. You must walk down the church and show yourself to the people. It would be ungracious not to do so."

"But where is your carriage, Mr. Gower?" inquired the clergyman. "I question whether you'll be able to get it through the crowd up to the chief entrance, if it is not there already."

"Tibby," said my husband, "wait here for an instant, and I'll go into the square myself and see about that."

So he left me for an instant, but did not return for several minutes. In the square he found the people bent on taking the horses out of the carriage, and dragging us in triumph to the hospital, whither they not unnaturally supposed we were about to return.

"Don't do that, my good friends," cried Julian, his powerful voice now doing him good service; "the lady won't like it. Indeed she won't. Don't interfere with my horses and servants!"

"Are you the matron's husband?" cried a score of different voices at the same time.

"Yes, my friends, I am," answered Julian. "I see you don't like me the worse for that."

A deafening cheer was the response accorded to this address.

"Now, my friends, listen to me. I am much

affected by this demonstration of your regard for my wife. That I am. Just hear what she wishes to do. She wishes to leave the vestry and walk down the middle of the church (so as to show herself to her friends there), and to leave by the great door. If you'll let my carriage come up to the door, she'll be able to see you all as we drive through you."

There was more cheering at this address, but still the crowd did not seem to relish the notion of being forbidden to pay me the compliment they intended.

"Order 'em, your honor!" cried an honest workman, who stood near my husband. "Order 'em! They'll like to be ordered by you. They'll regularly *enjoy it*, your honor! Order 'em."

But Julian had no need to act on this suggestion; for the members of the dense crowd, of their own accord, and very good-naturedly, gave way, cheering as a London crowd likes to cheer, and my husband's carriage speedily drew up against the door.

It took me nearly an hour to get through the church, for the women pressed upon me from all sides to wish me "God-speed!" Then they began to shake hands with me, and of course I was only too glad to respond to such a form of greeting. Many of them were the mothers and sisters of children who had been in the hospital; and as many of them as could get near enough to me to do so spoke a few words into my ear. But who, to my most extreme surprise on that morning of surprises, should stop me in the middle of the aisle but Mrs. Gurley, who had now made a second journey up to town from Loughton to rejoice with me in my joy, even as she had previously traveled up from the corn country to show her sympathy with my sorrow. "You see, dear," she said, kissing me, "I did not care to trouble you with a note to say what I intended doing, for fear you might forbid me. Ah, dear creature, I shall write such a letter to Gurley about it this very day! And, as I am going to make quite a long stay in Oxford Street this time, I shall be able to come and see you in your own home before I leave London and go back to Loughton."

At last I reached the door, where my husband's carriage was waiting for us.

"Throw it open—throw it open!" cried my dear husband to the servants; "let the people see your mistress!"

"Oh yes," I said, "let me see them."

While the servants were carrying out this direction we stood in the vestibule of the church surrounded by strangers, but still not yet manifest to the crowd outside. "Madam," said a gruff voice to me, "last night as the wind was toppling the silver clouds about the moon, and I smoked my pipe at the gate, I talked it all over to the 'little 'un,' and he's right pleased, as am I. I hope, madam, we sha'n't lose you quite."

"No, no," I said; "I shall have many a walk yet in Gray's Inn Gardens."

The carriage was ready for us, and my husband, giving me his arm, led me over the threshold of the church entrance. What a burst of cheers! what reiterated bursts of cheering shook the windows of the old deserted mansions as I took my seat by Julian—and we slowly made our way through the dense masses of our friends

down Marchioness Street, and round into Guildford Street, by which route we entered Russell Square, and then turned off toward Highgate. Brave, honest, affectionate crowd! They did not commend me only! The romance of their rugged natures was stirred by the spectacle of "a great rich gentleman" taking away as his wife "their hospital matron"—one inured to humble toil like themselves!

"Julian," I said, as their concluding hurrahs followed us, "I have done nothing save the faithful discharge of duties I was paid to perform. And see how they love us!"

"My dear Tibby," he answered, "it is the *lesson of the Rose*. It is the benediction after the sermon."

CHAPTER III.

THE EMPTY QUIVER.

OCTOBER has come again. It is the second October since my marriage.

Two years are long enough to enable me to say whether the actual felicity of married life has equaled my anticipations. A shrewd country dame I used to be familiar with in my childhood always declined to give an opinion of new settlers in her neighborhood until (to use her own language) she "had summered them and wintered them." My wedded experiences have twice passed through the process of "summering and wintering." What is the result? Is it well or ill for woman to live alone?

The luxuries and refinements that wealth can command are mine of course. My gardens and conservatories elicit the admiration of my neighbors, and bring distinguished visitors to "The Cedars." I have again returned to music and water-color painting, under the guidance of able artists—such as in my childhood and girlhood I never hoped to number among my personal acquaintance. For literature I have in my library whatever I wish to order. My husband is very popular in society, and he attracts to his house all the principal personages of London circles who are distinguished by any gift or achievement that men deem honorable. My tastes lead me to persevere in seclusion, but my husband's guests are pleased to visit him, and appear to have a cordial liking for his wife. My mind has also been enlarged by foreign travel, for I have been to Paris and Berlin. Wherever my husband goes in Great Britain it is, moreover, my wont to accompany him. Besides all these sources of enjoyment, I have the exquisite pleasure of being my husband's almoner; and to distribute the large sum that Julian Gower devotes to benevolent uses is to scatter bountifully among the indigent the means of obtaining physical comfort.

What more shall I add to this enumeration of my blessings?

My dear husband's worldly prosperity and dignity increase. He is wealthier and more honored than when he married me. An important constituency in the north of England has made him their representative in the House of Commons; and new as he is to the House, he is already regarded as a man of mark—ready to speak, powerful to convince, and lofty in his aims. To me he is all I knew he would be. His will is so completely mine, or my will so

completely his, that I seem to govern our domestic concerns according to my own humor. Really I sometimes feel as if a little opposition or manifestation of control on the part of Julian would be for my benefit, and save me from a tendency to imperiousness of manner. We are still young lovers, thinking and fearing and hoping for each other, as poets represent their young men and maidens.

I have no lack of occupation. The Hospital for Sick Children has much of my time and attention. My name is on the list of lady visitors now; and always once, and often three or four times a week, I am to be seen in Marchioness Street. Julian has given me a cottage at Highgate within a quarter of a mile of our garden-gate, which I have converted into an establishment for the convalescent children, so that they can breathe the invigorating air of my beloved Highgate Hill before returning to their humble homes.

Surely I have nothing to desire?

I often say I desire nothing more, and try to persuade myself that my heart agrees with my lips. I argue that children are an uncertain good—growing to shame and sorrow as often as to joy and gladness. When young girls of my neighbors marry, and leave their homes for new interests and engrossing cares, I whisper, "Ah, I am preserved from the anguish of such desertion! How could I bear to lose my children, when I had guided them through the dangers of early life, and reared them to the charms of womanhood." Last week a lady of my acquaintance received intelligence of her son's death, shot in an Indian battle. "Poor woman!" I said, "she knows a sorrow that will never touch me." If the question concerned only myself, I do not think it would trouble me much. It would be only now and then that my heart would see the hollowness of its own falsehoods. But with Julian by my side, how can I ever pretend to believe that which I am continually saying to myself?

I remember how in the garden of Lyman Hall (when he was only a boy) he declared his longing to be "a master," so that he might have "wife and children." He has a wife now—but he has no children. How hard to him, that his strong instinctive yearnings for offspring—(strong in all men, strongest in those who are noblest)—should be disappointed! Of course he conceals his sorrow—at least as far as fortitude and generous love can enable him do so. He is no whit less tender to me than he was. At times he displays such an excess of delicate thought for me, that a discomforting suspicion crosses my mind, and I ask myself, "Does he feel it necessary to be on the alert to hide his uneasiness from my observation?" As I said before, he is a lover rather than a husband. But he does not deceive me. I see too clearly. By one way only could he blind me; but he does not see it. If he were only to say to me now and then that he hoped ere long to be a father, I should be put into a slight transient ease. He used to say so once; he never says so now.

"Lo," says the Psalmist, "children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord.

"Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant; even so are the young children.

"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate."

The time was when I thought these words very beautiful. They are now very cruel to me—sharp-pointed "like as the arrows in the hand of the giant!" In the stillness and in the crowd they often recur to me. I know so well that *he* would be happier with children! "Julian, Julian!" I murmur to myself, as he sits in his arm-chair, *without* a child on his knee, "is it indeed a reproach to you among your enemies, that our home, so rich in the devices of art, wants that music which no wealth can buy?" And then I retire to a solitude where I may undisturbed pray to be endowed with the "heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord."

I think I should be less unhappy if I could take hold of Julian's hand, and ask him to forgive me. But I dare not even let him know that I ponder such a grief. I school myself to bear this cross, but it is the heaviest, and rudest, and hardest that has ever been laid upon my shoulders. It wears my spirits terribly, and wears them all the more, because I may not own to Julian that I am so worn. For several days past he has been urging me to make a trip to Brighton, to restore the lost color to my pale cheeks; and he speaks of my evident weariness and dejection as signs of an indisposition consequent on the situation of our house. To-morrow he will perhaps account for my ailing health in some other way; but whatever he says or leaves unsaid, he will endeavor to hide from me the sorrow which I know lives within him.

CHAPTER IV.

MYSTERIOUS PERSECUTION.

I HAD been for months very languid and depressed, utterly beaten in my spirits with continually thinking about my childlessness, and the deep mortification it must necessarily be to Julian. Since the October mentioned in my last chapter more than six months had elapsed; and now in the freshness of early spring I was sitting at the window of our library (which we used as a breakfast-room at "The Cedars"), and looking out upon the smooth green of the lawn, the shrubs displaying their first buds, the gray haze still hanging on the decline of the hill and defying the splendid sun, and the nearest outskirts of London in the distance. I was meditating on that which barred me from participation in the ordinary joy of creation. Every object in nature was displaying fresh signs of innate force—either clothing itself with the rich treasures hoarded during the coldness of winter in the secret places of its internal structure, or otherwise engaged on the mysterious task of reproducing life—life that in due course should be independent of its parent source, and in turn be life-producing. Such was nature's occupation; but I was cut off from it. I was precluded from participating in the universal and harmonious operations of nature. With all my gifts of fortune, I lacked the one endowment that human creatures rightly prize beyond all others. An alien in the life, where crooked destiny had fixed me, I could neither give expression to the long-

ings of my own breast, nor be other than a dark thread in the fair and delicate web of Julian's existence.

Julian had to visit the city that morning before going down to a committee of the House of Commons, and he broke in upon my sad meditations with the announcement of his intended movements.

"Tibby, my favorite horse is lame," he said, and "I do not care to-day to ride any other. Drive me about town in your phaeton this morning. Take me down to the Bank. I shan't be there more than half an hour; and when I have transacted my business in Princes Street, you shall take me on to Westminster. I'll get back here to dinner in a cab, and then go down again to the House late, for the debate."

"How soon shall we start?"

"In half an hour."

"Very well, Julian. The plan will suit me admirably. After I have left you at Westminster I will drive to Marchioness Street."

"Ay," replied Julian cheerfully, "and if you see Dr. Merriam, ask him why he does not come here more frequently and prescribe for a certain lady who is getting as thin as a wafer and as white as alabaster."

"No, no" (rather pettishly), "I shan't trouble the doctor with any useless complaints about my health."

"What are you looking at there, so sadly?" my husband next inquired, following the course taken by my eyes across the lawn.

"Look at our father of the trees," I said, pointing to a plantation at the corner of the garden, "it is sapless and dead; the cold winter has killed it. I'll order Crofts to cut it down."

"Why cut it down, my dear?"

"It is a culprit, and disobeys the laws of nature. Moreover, it is mournful and unsightly. Let it be removed, Julian."

As I said this, Julian took my right hand in his right hand, and looking down at me, covered my trembling self with the light of his eyes. He read my heart—and all its bitterness; exactly, utterly, and with deepest commiseration. I knew he read it, as well as years before I knew that my dear grandfather detected my love for my sister's betrothed, although no words had passed between us on the subject—as well as I knew that Etty had seized and wrung my secret from me, though I used every art of self-delusion to persuade myself that she was ignorant of it.

"Go, darling," said Julian, with grave and exquisite tenderness, "go and get ready for our drive: I will order the carriage. And, Tibby, we will keep our old father of the trees where he is. I only admired him when he was like all the others round him. But now that he is withered and dead I love him as if he were a living creature."

I took my husband into the City and to Westminster; after which I went to Marchioness Street, returning home to "The Cedars" by about three o'clock in the afternoon. But my drive had not dissipated my gloom. How should it? I tried to read, but the work in hand could not command my attention. I tried to make progress with a painting I had in hand, but the colors would not mix. I sat down at the piano, but every minute I struck a wrong note. At

five o'clock a message came from my husband saying that he could not return to dinner, and that I must console myself without his company till a late hour at night.

"John," I said to the servant, who waited at the door to hear if I had any answer to return to my husband by his messenger, "tell cook not to trouble herself about getting any dinner for me. I shall not dine at home, but will take tea at 'The Cottage.'"

"The Cottage" was the dwelling which Julian maintained for the reception of the convalescents from the Marchioness Street Hospital. To gratify me, he had ornamented it with carved wood pointings to the gables, and with trellis-work, just as "The Cottage" at Laughton was ornamented; and in the same way he had laid out the garden round it in imitation of the miniature "grounds" that girt the pretty building in which I and my dear sister had years ago established our school. Our regular number of convalescents in the hospital was twelve, the servants engaged for their comfort being two—a cook, and another respectable woman who acted as nurse and nursery governess to them, teaching them to read and sew, taking them out for walks, and superintending their games. "The Cottage" was Julian's gift to me on the first anniversary of our wedding-day; so that at the time of which I am now speaking I had had it nearly a year and seven months. I think of all my sources of pleasure it was the one from which I derived most enjoyment, and often I spent an entire day at it when Julian was absent from home.

It set me almost right again at the close of that spring day, which was so sad a one. They were all very nice children in "The Cottage" just then; and they so pleased me that evening when I took tea with them, that a thought which during the past year I had often taken up, and often laid aside as romantic and impracticable, renewed its power over my imagination. There was a beautiful child of the party—a sturdy, manly, blue-eyed, curly-pated boy, just seven years old. He had no mother living, and his father was a bad, selfish man, not caring enough for him ever to come to the hospital and see him during his sickness. The illness for which the child was admitted to the hospital was merely a common childish malady; and Dr. Merriam pronounced the boy to have a sound and vigorous constitution, as well as all the physical signs of active intelligence. Why should not Julian adopt him, or some such child? He would not be *our own*; we could never care for him altogether as our own; but still we might love him dearly, give him our name, and make him in the coming generations a memorial of our strong mutual affection. This plan of mine may be cause of smiles to such as do not sympathize with sorrows unlike their own. And it *does* make one smile sadly to see what tricks human love has recourse to in order that it may avoid the blank dreariness of its own disappointments.

Comforted and serene in mind, I was returning from "The Cottage" to "The Cedars." It was only a few steps from the one dwelling to the other; so, although it was dark, I took no servant to protect me for that short distance, but turned by myself from "The Cottage" garden into Highgate Lane. I had often and often done

so before, and had made the transit from "The Cottage" to my own grounds without being accosted by or even meeting any one.

On the present occasion, however, I had not advanced twenty paces when I was addressed by my own name, the sound of which in the quiet of the lane startled me, and made my heart beat fast.

"Why," said I, putting my hands upon the palings that ran alongside the foot-path, "how came you here?"

"You remember me, then?"

"Oh yes, I remember you."

It was that strange, mysterious lady who had twice before spoken to me, once in Hyde Park, and once in Mecklenburgh Square.

"Well," she asked, in the same composed voice of gentle, womanly sympathy, tinged at times with a tone and accent of mockery and bitterness, "are you as happy now that you are Mrs. Julian Gower of 'The Cedars,' as you were when you were only matron of the Sick Children's Hospital?—Are you as happy?"

"I am very happy."

"Nay, that is to avoid my question. Are you as happy as you were three years since?"

"Why do you so cross-examine me? Let me pass on. Indeed you do not show consideration for my feelings."

"Poor woman!" she said, with touching commiseration, "you are indeed to be pitied. Raised to wealth and social position, married to a man you love with your whole soul, surrounded with the means of doing that good which every reasonable person finds pleasure in effecting, you are still steeped in misery, and you would now rather have remained what three years since you were—a servant in a charitable institution."

"You speak as if you knew me thoroughly."

"I do know you thoroughly. When your husband is asleep you lie awake, and spend the hours of darkness in silent tears which you dare not show him. In the morning he sees your pale face, and feigns ignorance of its cause. You are well aware that he only *feigns* ignorance. It's an affection that is forced upon him, but it deceives neither him nor you; and what is more, *he knows that it does not impose upon you*. Were it not for the sin, I'd rather be an outcast in the street than put my lips to the cup from which you have to drink night and day, day and night."

"Would you," I asked, "goad me to rebel against the will of Providence? God gives each of his creatures a sorrow. Happiest are they who know how to extract most profit from so stern a discipline!"

"It is a stern discipline."

"Ay, but it is a merciful one also."

"You have found out its mercy?"

"I shall, one day."

"I sincerely hope you will! Do you remember what I said to you a few nights before your luckless marriage?"

"I do," I said, sharply.

"I told you," she continued, speaking very slowly, and throwing the venom of bitterness into each of her words, "then, what experience teaches you now. I said, 'You will be happy if you have children. But a childless wife no husband can really love. May you never learn the truth of my words! Mr. Gower is a man of high principle, and under any circumstances

he will show you much consideration and tenderness: but if you should not have children, you'll have reason to regret that you did not remain the matron of the Marchioness Street Hospital."

"Wicked, cruel woman," I said, hoarsely, "you struck that arrow into my heart then, and you come to-night to turn round its barbed fangs. What have I done to rouse your hate that you thus come to exult over my wretchedness? Is not woman's nameless grief sacred to you?"

"Then you *are* wretched?" she observed, with composure, taking up my admission.

"Leave me," I said. "You have no right to speak to me thus. Oh, that we were men!"

"But we are not; we are only two weak women, privileged to cut ourselves into pieces with our tongues! Come, Mrs. Gower, have my words proved true, or have they not?"

"They have not proved true," I answered, indignantly. "Never was wife loved as I am loved by Julian Gower."

"He treats you with tenderness. I *told* you he would treat you with tenderness; but his increasing gentleness and consideration are only employed by him to hide from you the growing coldness of his affection for you. They are but artifices to spare you the pain of seeing that his love for you is on the wane. *You know that.* Why even now he is casting about to find out some one to love better than yourself!"

She paused, and I spoke next; but not until I had checked my passion by counting the seconds of a minute. Then I said, "That is a foul, false calumny, and none but a very wicked woman could have uttered it."

"Ah!" she laughed, quite unmoved by my scornful anger. "You disbelieve me. I gave you a prophecy before your marriage; it has proved true, but you notwithstanding refuse to believe in me. You want a sign—come, I will give you one. On your next birthday Mr. Gower will bring home with him a boy, just about thirteen years old, and say to you, 'Tibby, love this boy for his sake and my sake. God has given us no children. Let us then make this dear little lad our son.' When this shall happen, you will remember my words of to-night, and say, 'It is a sign that what *she* says will prove true.' Mrs. Gower, you'll welcome that child more with your lips than your heart! At first you'll generously award him your protection; but when you see how your husband loves him better than yourself, you'll have little charity to him. Now I leave you for the present; but you have not seen the last of me. When the boy of whom I tell you has become one of your family, I'll come and ask you whether the sign has come, and whether my words have proved true. Something more too, before we part. You have called me a calumnious and a wicked woman. Your past experiences, Mrs. Gower, should have taught you charity. Not many days shall pass over your head before you say, 'That woman's motives of action are unknown to me, and the course of life she has taken is mysterious; but I can not believe that she is altogether wicked.'"

She did not say this angrily or vindictively, not even sternly. While I trembled with anger at the insult I had received, she was perfectly cool, and collected, and composed under the reproaches I had given her.

She left me close beside my garden; for during our interchange of words we more than once progressed several paces, I wishing to bring our painful interview to a close, and she bent upon not letting me escape till she had effected the impression she desired to effect upon my mind.

When I was safe within the inclosure of "The Cedars" garden I felt I could not rest indoors. That which I had heard, and the woman from whom I had heard it, had so excited me, that I felt a necessity for continued bodily motion. Up and down the gravel drive I therefore paced, recalling all the circumstances, and all the events of my previous life in connection with this woman, whose mysterious purpose it clearly was to track me into every retreat, and watch not only my outward conduct, but all the secret workings of my inmost heart. Who was she? When did she first begin her supervision over me? What was the motive of her curious persecution? She knew at least many of the facts of my early history. It was from her lips that I had first learned much of what was most terrible in my poor sister's story. She spoke of Julian Gower as though she maintained a similar observance over him. And now, not confining herself to the past, she was telling me what was to occur to me in the future. Who was this child that my husband would soon bring home and adopt? It was clear that she wished to imply something more than that the child would supplant me in the affections of my husband.

The first resolve I made in the course of my meditations was to tell Julian, immediately he returned from London, all that had happened to me in his absence. He was already acquainted with the circumstances of my previous intercourse with my mysterious persecutor, and I would tell how she had renewed her impertinent and unfeeling action toward me. But then, I reflected that I could not impart to him all the woman had said, without touching upon that sad subject on which I could not speak to him, though I and he might both think of it unceasingly.

So here was a second subject in my married life, on which my lips were sealed to Julian; and I began to fear that as the days passed over us other topics would arise on which we could not hold free interchange of thought, and that so ere long, like many married couples, we should lead separate lives.

This was the most torturing thought of all!

CHAPTER V.

A VISITOR IN MARCHIONESS STREET.

DURING the weeks intervening between the events narrated in the last chapter and the next anniversary of my birthday I did not pass a day without thinking frequently of the lady's words. I waited impatiently to see if those words should be fulfilled. My husband of course saw that I was occupied with an engrossing topic, but he neither rallied me on my absence of mind, nor made any comment on the irritability that I more than once evinced to the servants and those around me. Far from being pleased with his placidity and forbearance, I construed them as indications that he either read so plainly the cause of my discomposure he could not find it

in his heart to reproach me, or that he was too much engaged with a private scheme of his own to care about my fretfulness.

No words could have been devised with greater subtlety to rouse the happy feeling existing between me and Julian than those in which my persecutor (as I was pleased to term her) had given form and precision to my own vague suspicion that his gentle demeanor was but the cloak of the chagrin and mortification which consumed him secretly. I caught myself watching him closely, and in doing so I learned to discern that I in my turn was scrutinized not less assiduously by his truthful eyes. And thus the form and genuine spirit of suspicion rose up between us. My life had taught me self-control. I therefore never in his presence was betrayed into any violent expression of emotion. I never shed a tear that he saw; and if I smiled less frequently when he was with me, I still did my best to make him cheerful in his home. But that best effort was altogether ineffectual.

I learned to be thankful that his commercial and political engagements took him away from "The Cedars" for the greater part of his evenings, as well as his days. Yes, it had come to that! My persecutor had spoken truly; for I was steeped in misery, and would gladly have surrendered my proud position as the wife of Julian, and resumed my life where I had left it some two years and eight months before, so that he might be more happily married. It may not be supposed that my loyal love to him wavered, or became less ardent. Far from it! Though the seeds of a terrible distrust of his love for me had been planted in my breast, and were there germinating, I loved him more than ever. In the depths of my consciousness, beneath the fret and trouble above, there abode a steady conviction that he was unalterably good.

As Julian, while the mists of suspicion were growing thicker and darker between us, steadily continued to discharge the duties which each day brought him, so did I persevere in attending to all the graver engagements, among which my time was distributed. I was more regular than ever I had been since my marriage in visiting my poor dependents in Highgate, and making arrangements for the greater efficiency of "The Cottage" and the Marchioness Street Hospital.

An event occurred at that time in the hospital which even added to my perplexity at former occurrences. I was in the committee-room of the hospital with Mrs. Monk and one or two other ladies interested in the institution, when the matron who had succeeded me entered, and informed us that Miss Grace Temple was then in the part of the hospital which bore her name, and was talking to the sick children in the wards. The announcement justified the expressions of surprise with which we received it. Miss Grace Temple had always been to us a most mysterious personage. Through her solicitor we had received the £1000 which enabled us to take the larger of our two houses, and since that time her solicitor had transmitted us annually the munificent subscription of £450. She was therefore by far the principal benefactress of the charity. Yet no one connected with the institution had ever been able to learn any thing of her. Her name appeared in no Directory. And beyond having sent the poor child, entered in the register as

Alfred Jourdain, to the hospital for treatment, it did not appear that she had ever made any demand on the powers of the institution, to the support of which she so liberally contributed. It was not known that she had ever before entered the walls of "Grace Temple."

From the matron's account it appeared that Miss Temple, on hearing that the lady-visitors were then present in the hospital, had expressed a wish to see them after the transaction of their ordinary business, in order that she might learn from them some particulars relative to the institution. Of course on hearing this we were anxious to display every attention to the great benefactress of our hospital; and Mrs. Monk immediately went to the wards of "Grace Temple" to find the lady, and lead her to us. At the termination of five minutes Mrs. Monk returned with the stranger. Graceful and singularly prepossessing in style, but not beautiful, Miss Temple entered, bowing slightly to us. It was a warm day, so she was dressed lightly—in gray and black silks. Her attire, indeed, was half-mourning.

"I have to offer you a thousand apologies for disturbing you," she said, with agreeable composure and cordiality, "and the more so as Mrs. Monk has been kind enough to gratify my curiosity about this admirably managed institution. But as I asked my solicitor, Mr. Castleton, to meet me here, I think I had better wait till he arrives. Dear me, there is a carriage now stopping at the door; and there is a ring at the bell. Surely that must be Mr. Castleton."

In another half minute the door was opened, and Mr. Castleton, the solicitor, who had more than once brought Miss Temple's checks to the Committee in his own person, was announced.

Immediately upon his entrance Miss Grace Temple rose from the seat she had just taken, and bowing to us, placed her hand on her lawyer's proffered arm and retired.

"What a sweet-looking woman!"

"What a fascinating smile she has!"

"In what admirable taste she was dressed!"

These and many other similar exclamations were the criticisms expended on Miss Temple, as the carriage containing her and her solicitor rolled down Marchioness Street.

"How singular she should never have been here before!" observed one of the lady-visitors.

"How very singular!" was a general chorus elicited by this remark.

When there was silence, I said, quietly,

"Miss Temple has been here before. She visited the hospital for something less than a minute when I was matron."

"Indeed! Are you sure, Mrs. Gower?"

"Quite sure," I answered. "Mrs. Monk, you may remember that some seven years ago I fainted away in Hyde Park, and a lady brought me home to the hospital in her carriage."

"To be sure, I remember it," answered Mrs. Monk.

"The lady who befriended me then is the same lady who just now left this room."

The meeting of the lady-visitors broke up, and each one of them doubtless told the story of the morning's adventure in her family circle; but I was the only one of them who saw the object Miss Grace Temple had in paying this unexpected visit to the hospital. She had said to

me in Highgate Lane, "Not many days shall pass over your head before you say 'That woman's motives of action are unknown to me, and the course of life she has taken is mysterious, but I cannot but believe that she is altogether wicked.'" At least in that she had spoken truly. My persecutor's name was Grace Temple; and her unobtrusive benevolence, manifested in the support she had given the hospital for more than twelve years, compelled me to acknowledge to myself that, however vexatious her conduct had been to me in Highgate Lane, she "could not be a wicked woman."

But if her appearance in Marchioness Street (in all her fourth apparition to me) caused me to modify my opinion of her, it greatly increased the mystery with which she was enveloped. Disappointed, unhappy, embittered, she might be; but clearly she was one who did good deeds, with noiseless perseverance. I yet the more was impressed by a sense of her force and distinctiveness of character—a sense which had been first created by the quiet dignity of her bearing in Hyde Park. But what could be her object in singling me out for attention? There was clearly a continuous method in her treatment of me and my affairs. She had not given her patronage to the Children's Hospital till I had been its matron for two years. Was I the attraction which had drawn her aid to the institution? Or had she for the first time become aware of my existence, by seeing my name on the reports as matron to the charity? But in either case, her manifest interest in me was unaccountable. Why, again, should she be curious about my husband's happiness? If her announcement relative to the child he intended to adopt should be fulfilled (and momentarily I felt more certain of its fulfillment), how was I to account for her knowledge of his private affairs, or even her influence over his conduct, which the prediction indicated? Did he know aught of her? even as she knew much of him?

Julian and I dined together, without company, that day.

When the servants had left us over our dessert, I said, "Julian, I have seen Miss Temple to-day."

"Miss Temple? Miss Temple?" he repeated several times, apparently endeavoring to recall who the lady might be; and then with a look of sudden enlightenment, he added, "What, not Miss Grace Temple, the benefactress of your hospital! Surely you do not mean her?"

Clearly he had no private reasons for feeling an interest in her name.

I described to him very minutely her personal appearance, her dress, her figure, her face, her manner, her voice; but without recalling to his mind any person he had ever seen. There could be no affectation in his ignorance of the lady. She had said plainly that his gentleness to me was in part hypocritical; but I knew that Julian Gower was no man of petty artifices and small reserves.

I must wait—wait patiently, till the lapse of a few more weeks brought my birthday.

One thing, however, the discovery of that morning effected for my comfort. I was enabled to think of my mysterious acquaintance as Miss Grace Temple instead of "my persecutor." It put my mind in some sort of ease with regard

to her. I felt that, notwithstanding her cruel words to me, I could trust her as a woman of good character and benevolent intentions, however eccentric she might be. And there was comfort in that.

It would, I argued, clearly be useless for me to attempt to discover who she was. Most probably her name of Grace Temple was assumed; but the fact of her benevolence was no assumption.

I must wait—wait patiently a few more weeks.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

BUT though I was easier in my mind with regard to Miss Grace Temple, my life with my beloved husband became daily more full of pain. It could not be all mere suspicion on my part. Why his eyes no longer delighted to rest upon me with their old expression of tenderness! He would look at me for minutes together—eagerly, inquisitively, severely, but never with pure gentleness. At other times his glance avoided mine, as though he feared to betray that which he wished to keep a secret. He was moody and absorbed, not hearing the remarks I addressed to him—or if he heard them neglecting to reply till minutes had elapsed, and my mind had gone on to another subject. I could no longer indulge my grief in silent tears during the still hours of night; for he became sleepless, and to avoid his observation I had to feign slumber for hours together, when I longed for the relief of weeping, unvisited.

The summer came, the flowers and the green of my garden bursting out with brightness and freshness. The birds played and chattered in the trees, the young ones chirping as the old ones sang out bravely. Our "father of the trees" stood up sere and leafless, avoided by the birds. They had no pity or love for barren branches.

"Tibby," said Julian to me one morning, "to-morrow is our birthday."

I started.

"Why, child," he returned, in answer to my shiver, "do you dread the day? Remember how we enjoyed it in childhood! What happy birthdays they were at Farnham Cobb! I would give the best bin in my cellar for one bottle of the grandfather's 'Madeira!' You don't dread growing old?"

"No, Julian, it is the appointed order for living things; only some find their old age at three-score years and ten, and some in childhood. We must all wither and pass away."

"Ay, but it is too early for us to talk of withering. We shall be only forty-one to-morrow."

At this I smiled, and said, "We are quite a young couple still."

"Darling," continued my husband, "business will take me out early to-morrow. But I shall be back early in the afternoon. So do not be 'at home' to callers, for I wish to spend the anniversary of our birthday with you alone, according to our wont."

"Of course, dear. I should not like our custom to be changed."

That night I never closed my eyes for a single

wink, and by six o'clock Julian (having also passed a restless night) rose, and left "The Cedars" in my open carriage—having borrowed it of me for the day.

I breakfasted at my usual hour, and after breakfast I spent an hour or more in the garden, wondering what the day would bring forth, and then to get diversion from the painful reflections that crowded upon me, I walked down the lane to "The Cottage," and busied myself with my colony of convalescents. The bonny blue-eyed little boy was still with them, though he had for several days been restored to perfect health. There was no home in the world where he was needed, and I could not make up my mind to part with him. As I passed through the wicket of "The Cottage" garden I found him busy, digging away on "his plot," and he looked up at me with a smile which said, "Praise me, ma'am, for my industry." And I praised him as I best could, but my thoughts wandered from him to my husband.

What would the day bring forth?

As the clock struck two I re-entered the dining-room of "The Cedars," and I had just taken a seat on the sofa to rest myself after my exertion, when I heard wheels on the drive. It was my carriage—I knew the sound of it well. I passed the window, but it bore no one besides the servants.

"John," I exclaimed, running out into the porch, "where is your master?"

"Master got out of the carriage, ma'am, at the bottom of the hill," answered John. "Master and the young gentleman thought they'd like the walk up the hill."

The young gentleman! Grace Temple had spoken the truth! Here was my birthday present!

I went out to meet them; but as I approached the garden gate my heart failed me; and just as I heard their voices I turned from the carriage-way into a by-path winding through the shrubbery, and stood concealed behind a wall of fir and laurel while they passed. I saw them as they passed. The young gentleman was a slight, elegant stripling, with bright flaxen hair worn long, so that it curled upon the collar of his jacket. Blue eyes, a nose somewhat aquiline, thin merry lips, and an animated countenance; I remarked that he had these features as he walked daintily, looking up into my husband's face with a delighted expression. He was, moreover, endowed with a singularly musical voice and laugh. I heard them both as he went up the drive.

Short as that moment of observation was, I caught the aspect, never to be forgotten, of my husband's face. A radiant glory was upon it. Never, not even on our wedding, not even on the day when he had won Etty's promise to be his wife, had I seen such intense happiness cover him.

Like one who had been guilty of meanness I slipped out stealthily from my place, and following my husband and the young gentleman, speedily overtook them.

"Tibby," said my husband, "let me introduce you to my young friend Arthur Williams, who has come to wish you many happy returns of your birthday, and spend his holidays with us. He's at school at Dr. Renter's of Blackheath, and has a vacation of six weeks before him."

"I am afraid you will find it very dull, my dear boy," I said, kindly, "but I will do my best to make you enjoy yourself. We have a capital boys' cricket-club in Highgate, which you can join."

Raising his gaze from the ground, the boy flashed his clear honest eyes full upon me, and the color rising in his delicate face, he answered, frankly, and at the same time with a pretty assumption of manly courtesy, "Thank you, Mrs. Gower. I will gladly join the cricket-club, for I am very fond of cricket; but there is no fear of my days passing slowly, if you will allow me the privilege of waiting on you, and accompanying you in your drives about the neighborhood."

"Good Heavens, my dear child!" I said, having first started back when I saw his full face. "You almost alarm me, you so closely resemble one who was very dear to me, but is now in heaven."

"Thank you, ma'am," the boy said, simply, as though he felt he had just received a compliment, "I am glad you like me. I hope I shall remind you of him in other things besides my face."

"My friend was a girl," I answered. "You may not be angry, Arthur."

The boy came close up to me, and, taking my hand, pressed it to his lips. "Oh, Mrs. Gower," he said, his eyes brightening, "I never was called Arthur before by a lady!"

He had kissed my hand uninvited. So I saluted him on the forehead, when, far from being offended, as some school-boys would have been, his face showed that he was well pleased with my attention.

"I know who it is you're thinking of, Tibby," said my husband, dryly.

Julian and I took Arthur round the garden, displaying him all its treasures—the foreing-houses, the conservatory, the moat, the bowling-green. Then we showed him the stables; and my husband led out the pony set apart for his young visitor's sole use. "You can ride, of course, Arthur?" said I. "I suppose so, Mrs. Gower. At least I soon will," answered Arthur, with a touch of crimson on his cheeks.

"Have a ride before dinner," said my husband. "Here, Marshman, while Mr. Williams is with us, you must act as his groom. Bring his pony to the door in half an hour, and be yourself ready to accompany him. If he should need a hint about managing his horse you needn't be afraid to tell him, for he is not so accustomed to deal with horse-flesh as you and I are, Marshman. And now, Arthur, I dare say if you make love to Mrs. Gower she'll find you some lunch before you start on your equestrian venture. Don't ride quite as far as Cornwall, for we dine at six."

At the appointed time the horses were at the door, and my guest mounted his steed, while I looked on.

"You wouldn't think I had never been on a horse before, would you, Mrs. Gower? I didn't get up like a tailor, did I now?" he asked, with a merry laugh.

"Marshman," I said, in a low voice, to my husband's groom, "be very careful that young gentleman comes to no harm."

Of course this entreaty was not uttered till Arthur was out of hearing.

"I'll take care, ma'am," answered the steady old groom: "but a young gentleman like that young gentleman may be left to take care of himself."

As soon as our guest was out of sight my husband led me to a shady part of the lawn, and, walking by my side on the grass, began a conversation with me by going straight to the consideration of our young visitor.

"Tibby," said my husband, "you must be very careful not to ask that boy any questions about his parentage; and you had better, as far as possible, avoid displaying any curiosity about his past experiences. His history is briefly this: He is the son of a very dear friend of mine, whom I have long mourned for as dead—a friend to whom I am indebted for much of the happiness I have experienced in life. This boy is that friend's only child. But unfortunately there is a cloud hanging over his birth, a cloud that neither you nor he ought to penetrate; for shame, and disgrace, and sorrow are behind it. To this day he has never known his mother's name nor seen his father's face. As a little child he was educated (I might almost say *nursed*) at Brighton in a school for children, presided over by a lady; but for the last five years he has been at Dr. Renter's school at Blackheath, spending the holidays with the doctor's family. His face shows that, on the whole, he has not had an unhappy existence; but it was very touching to hear him an hour since tell you that he had never before been called 'Arthur' by a lady. Doubtless the doctor's daughters are in the habit of calling him by his surname."

"Have you long known that he was at Blackheath?" I asked.

"On the contrary, it was not till three weeks since that I saw him or knew of his abode. A mere accident led Dr. Renter to speak of the boy (the doctor's business with me was on an altogether different matter), and from inquiry I learned that Arthur was my old friend's son. Tibby, we have no child of our own. Let us cherish that promising boy. The time is coming when he will need the countenance and support of powerful friends to shield him from the unkindnesses to which young men of dubious birth are subjected. Let us love him."

It had come true.

But why did the advent of the boy disturb me? More especially, why did the tender regard manifested by my husband for the delicate, girlish, gallant stripling trouble me? It was only that very morning I had recalled my own romantic dream of getting him to adopt the child of some poor workman. And here had Julian, anticipating all suggestions from me, carried out my own scheme with an important improvement—bringing to my house not a mechanic's hardy brat, but an elegant, gently nurtured boy, in whom physical and mental graces were combined. Yet I was far from pleased with the occurrence, much as I was prepossessed in favor of my new companion.

It was impossible to dislike the boy. Had he not been a most lovable lad I should have conceived a repugnance to him. But he was such a courageous, hearty, merry, leonine youngster, and withal so elegant, and dandified, and toy-like, I was compelled to take him to my heart. Whatever might be the merits or the demerits

of Dr. Renter's school, the lad had picked up numerous accomplishments at it. He sang French as well as English ballads, accompanying himself on the piano-forte; he wrote comic verses after the manner of the "Rejected Addresses," and rattled away in the most delightfully innocent, and self-complacent, and joyous, and man-of-the-world style. After he had been with us a few days, I asked him how it came that the Miss Renters had never called him "Arthur." "Oh, Mrs. Gower," answered the arching, laughing, "that would never do. The doctor couldn't have allowed that. If they had called me 'Arthur' one week, they'd have called me 'dear Arthur' the next week, and then who knows what would have happened? So I am always 'Williams Tertius' to them. Very queer, isn't it, Mrs. Gower? But they are nice, dear girls, and in holidays they take me with them wherever they go, only they make it a rule to order every one to call me 'Williams Tertius.' It doesn't hurt me of course, but sometimes it makes me feel as if I was a queer sort of natural eccentricity—a kind of flower instead of a pure boy. But they're jolly girls, and Miss Christabel is the nearest hand at *Les Grâces* that I ever saw in my life."

"Julian," I said, looking sharply round at my husband, as the boy ran on in this way, "don't let his voice and his pertness put you in mind of some one as well as his face?"

"Good Heavens, Tibby!" exclaimed Julian, almost angrily, "do get that notion out of your head. It's a painful one."

"Perhaps, Sir," said Arthur, "you'd like me to speak like Punch, with a squeak, and through my nose, and then I shan't put Mrs. Gower so much in mind of some one."

The boy was a great diversion to us. He treated me, and I do believe thought me one of the most benignant and important ladies in the world. Doubtless the size and freshness of our house, the garden, the stable full of horses, our carriages, and all the other appointments of "The Cedars" greatly impressed and delighted the inexperienced child, causing him to esteem the mistress of so splendid an establishment more highly than he would have done had he found her living in a dingy cottage. The attentions and the flatteries that he lavished upon me were innumerable; the extravagant and magnificent terms in which he paid me the most elaborate compliments, rendering his courtly homage peculiarly *naïve*, and innocent, and piquant in effect. Every morning I had a flower on my breakfast plate, brought by him from the garden for my especial delectation, and every night he left me with an assurance, dressed up in dozens of different dresses of verbiage, that "the minutes flowed so quickly in my society, he never knew the proper time, or the desire to withdraw for the refreshment of his pillow."

He was the most active, and *efficiently* active boy I ever met. He had always *just done* something. We never heard of his achievements, in their preparation or progress, but only at the moment of their triumphant accomplishment, or just afterward. He made himself quite at home at "The Cedars" and with our neighbors at Highgate, being at the close of his six weeks' visit altogether a more important person in the parish than his host. Every day he would slip

out into the lane, and be absent for three or four hours gathering gossip and news for our delectation at dinner. One day he came back from his trip into the lane (whenever he left "The Cedars" garden it was "to take a saunter down the lane"), habited in his cricketing suit of white flannel, and swaying his bat to and fro with signs of elation. He had just *won* a match at single wicket. On another occasion he presented himself before me at the close of the afternoon with similar exultation, and informed me that he had just won the sweepstakes at a hurdle-race. It was rather jolly. "Won the sweepstakes at a hurdle-race! what can you mean, Arthur?" I asked with surprise. On explanation it appeared that Arthur Williams, Esquire, of "The Cedars," Highgate, had got up a hurdle-race on the green, with seven other *mounted* lads. They had subscribed five shillings each for the entertainment, of which sum they had paid £1 to a man who fixed up the hurdles for them, and £1 they had set aside as the "winner's purse." And the winner's purse had fallen to Mr. Arthur Williams, who had organized the whole affair, and rode his pony in his cricket jacket and blue cap. Julian was immensely tickled at the boy's narrative of this "event of the turf;" but I don't think he was quite so well pleased when he learned that Arthur, to create a more striking effect on the race-course, had cut the beautiful bush-tail of his magnificent pony to make it resemble "a regular blood racer." "I don't know how to account for it, Tibby," said Julian with good-humored malice, in revenge for the injury done to the pony's tail, "but we always hear of Arthur's contests when he *wins*, but never when he *loses*." "Why, Mr. Gower," responded the boy with an audacious simplicity that deprived my husband's sarcasm of all its power, "of course I don't tell you when I lose. That would never do. For then you'd laugh at me, instead of *with* me."

I soon saw that my husband had conceived an ardent affection for the boy. He took him the round of the theatres and places of public amusement—to the operas and principal houses of dramatic entertainment. They rode in the Park together, Arthur all spick and span in his best dandy habiliments, with pink-tinted gloves, and a gold-headed whip with which my husband presented him. Julian carried him off one evening to the *soirée* of a scientific institution; but that entertainment Arthur frankly assured me was "the awfulest bore he had ever been let in for." So to make amends for this "awfulest bore," Julian gave him what the child afterward designated as "great fun," in the shape of a dinner at the Conservative Club, where Mr. Arthur threw himself back in his chair, and was good enough to praise the wine, although in his opinion it "would have been all the better for a little age."

To me, as I have said, his gallantry was unbounded; and it really made me quite light-hearted to have him by my side during my drives. To accompany me he always made himself the most exquisite little dandy imaginable, putting on fresh light gloves, and arranging every item of his toilet with extreme care. He was such a sunny, dainty little fellow, that I always selected the brightest and prettiest drives when he was my companion. Once, however, I took him into the "old law neighborhood," and left him in the carriage in Marchioness Street while I went into

the hospital. On our way down to the institution, I did my best to interest him in its objects and operations; but when I alighted from the carriage his only expression of sympathy with my labors was to say, "Poor little wretches! I am sure, my dear Mrs. Gower, I hope you won't catch any thing by being so good to them! It must be very dangerous!" And having said this, the young gentleman lounged back in my phaeton in a most languishing fashion, and put up one of his patent-leather boots on the opposite cushion, so that he might admire it at his ease.

I was quite irritated with his careless manner; and I punished him by being much longer than was necessary in the hospital. Indeed he had to wait for me nearly two hours at the door of "Grace Temple."

On returning to "The Cedars" the first thing I did was to go to Julian and say, "My dear, you told me the other day that you gave Arthur a tip of a £5 note, so that he might return to Blackheath well supplied with cash."

"Yes, what of that?" answered Julian.

"Can you tell me the number of the note?"

"Certainly, here is the number marked down in my pocket-book, 40,562."

"I thought so!" I exclaimed triumphantly. "While I was in the hospital this morning that note was slipped into the contribution box, and that little monkey did it."

"By Jove!" cried Julian. "What a splendid lad he is! But why do you call him a monkey?"

When I told Julian of the boy's superb airs, just before he gave all his pocket-money to the sick children, our gratification and pride in his conduct did not preclude us from indulging in a hearty laugh.

CHAPTER VII.

A CALLER'S CARD.

I BECAME so attached to Arthur, that toward the close of his visit I almost ceased to trouble myself about the mysteries connected with his appearance at "The Cedars." Both I and Julian were so much the happier for his presence that I not only felt grateful to him, but conceived for him a love similar to that which mothers feel for their own offspring. But even while he was with us, and while his company reconciled me in some degree to all its circumstances, I was not pleased with the inordinate fondness that Julian exhibited to him, whereas I never praised the boy, or declared my affection for him, without a flood of satisfaction and delight rising in my husband's face. And when I observed that difference between us, I began to seek after its cause. How was I to account for it? What was its explanation? Did Julian love him more than I did? If so, what was the cause? what especial hold had the boy upon his heart? Then, looking at the subject from another point of view, I would regard it as evidence that Julian was only more anxious than I to have the amusement and kindly pleasure of seeing a child moving about our house. But that view of the matter greatly troubled me, as it seemed to involve reproach to me.

When Arthur returned to Blackheath, it was

with a promise that he would spend his next holidays with us. After he had gone, the house was strangely altered. In a few days Julian became again silent, and absorbed, and moody. "He was happy," I said to myself, "while Arthur was with us; but now that the boy has taken his departure he finds my society flat and wearisome." He loves him, I thought, better than he does me; and in five minutes I was fretting with jealousy, and I saw that I should never be happy with an adopted child whom my husband loved. I desired such an object on which to expend the force of *my* surplus affection; but I could not endure the thought of letting my husband have the same gratification. It is with shame I own I was so selfish, that it never occurred to me my husband would have an equally valid reason for not liking me to expend the warmth of my heart on a child not really his own. Let childless couples rely on me. If a childless husband and wife love each other, they must reconcile themselves to their hard lot as they best can. An adopted child would only be a cause of jealousy and pain to each. Nature's decrees can not be overridden by a mere artificial arrangement.

So much was this the case with me, that though I wrote to Arthur three days after he returned to Blackheath, and told Julian I had done so, it vexed me at the end of the week to see my husband sitting down at his desk to pay the boy the same attention.

I have just spoken of Julian's silence and moodiness. They lasted for ten days, and then they were exchanged for a boisterous hilarity, such as I had never before witnessed in him. He literally frightened me with the extravagance he committed, running and leaping on our lawn like a school-boy, laughing at and making a jest of every ordinary subject that engaged his attention. I asked him, with absolute fear and trembling, how he could account for his high spirits; but he either only put me off with a kiss or began to talk in a rapturous way about Arthur. "Tibby," he cried, "you are not forty-one—I am not forty-one. I am younger in heart, limb, life, than I was when I returned from South America. My mid-summer holidays with *my* boy Arthur have brought youth back to me again. Oh, Tibby, how I love the pretty scamp, and thank you for taking him to your affection! We'll make a man of him. He shall head his generation—lead it in wealth, intellect, honor, achievement!"

Yes! his love for me had come to that—*gratitude because I cared for another!*

When he had spent a few days in this mad, spasmodic exultation, and while his spirits were still at the highest pitch of their unnatural excitement, he informed me that he had to leave home on special and very important business for ten days or a fortnight. He told me neither where he was going nor with what object. Half an hour after making the announcement he was off to catch the train, and I was left by myself to suffer under the miserable jealousy and distrust of him, which were corroding all the good qualities of my nature. I could not endure to think that he loved that plaything boy better than he loved me. What had been the words of that mysterious woman who persisted in influencing me and him—yes, *him*, though he pro-

fessed to be ignorant of her existence? "Mrs. Gower," she had said, "you'll welcome that child more with your lips than with your heart. At first you will generously award him your protection, but when you see that your husband loves him better than yourself you'll have little charity to him."

Every word she had spoken had come true. I had been compelled to modify my harsh opinion of her! The boy had been brought to my house on the very day she had named, and already I was beginning to feel resentment to him for having stolen from me the affection of my husband!

I had spent the whole morning next after my husband's departure brooding over these facts, when at a customary calling hour a carriage drove up to the entrance of my house. I was at the time walking in a distant part of the garden, and as I did not recognize the equipage, I remained where I was till a servant should come and tell me the names of my visitors. As I waited at my station of observance I remembered with regret that I had not ordered the servants to refuse me to callers.

In a minute the servant came across the lawn to me, bearing the caller's card.

On the card was this inscription—*Miss Grace Temple.*

For a few seconds I felt so indignant at her intrusion that I was on the point of sending the servant back with word that I could not see her. But if no other motives had influenced me, after two or three moments' reflection, curiosity would alone have determined me not to act on my hasty resolution. Whoever she was, however much she had tried to poison my peace of mind, whatever her purpose might be toward me, she held the key to the mysteries which had for days been cruelly torturing me. If I was to obtain the information for which I yearned, the acquisition would be made through her. I dared not set myself in antagonism to her.

So I told the man to take back an assurance to the lady that I would be with her almost immediately.

I consumed a moment in regaining my composure. Then I walked slowly across the lawn to my house. On my way through the hall I told my servant that, if any other callers came, they were to be told I was so particularly engaged that they could not see me. With Miss Temple's carriage standing before my door, the man could not well refuse them with a simple assertion that I was not at home.

Having taken this precaution against interruption, I entered my drawing-room, and stood face to face with *Miss Grace Temple.*

CHAPTER VIII.

PLEASANT SUGGESTIONS.

SHE was standing by one of the windows surveying the garden when I entered. Dressed in the same colors and style, wearing the same lofty composure on her delicate face, advancing toward me with the same elegant carriage as I had remarked on our previous interviews, and covered with all that best womanly refinement and grace by which ladies are to be distinguished from women of humbler degree, Miss Temple

(notwithstanding my roused antagonism to her) impressed me more favorably than ever. Her persecution and impertinence were not those of a vulgar adventurer. I could not do otherwise than treat her with the respect due to one of my own sex and social condition. Even though it was her whim to sport with my feelings, I felt the necessity of patiently enduring the torture.

A sense that it was prudent to conciliate her made me throw more than ordinary cordiality into my manner, as I assured her that it gave me great pleasure to see her in my house.

"No, Mrs. Gower," she said, quickly, "you do not feel *great pleasure* in seeing me in this pretty drawing-room. You experience the uneasiness of an irritation which you deem it imprudent to express, and just a little hope that the cause of my calling on you may not be an evil one. Surely such feelings do not constitute *great pleasure*."

"My words," I answered, with as much stateliness as my diminutive figure and insignificant presence would permit me to assume, "were intended to imply that since you had paid me the compliment of a visit, I was anxious to receive you courteously, *as though* it gave me great pleasure to do so."

"For that I sincerely thank you, Mrs. Gower. I trust the day will still come when such a welcome will be accorded to me by you, not in mere courtesy, but in genuine kindness of feeling. We ought to be friends. You know well how large a share of my sympathy you have had for years. And now I do most heartily pity you. You are very unhappy."

"I am not unhappy."

"Are you not? Well! have my words proved true?"

"Much that you told me should transpire has taken place."

"Good! Your husband brought Arthur Williams home to you on your last birthday. You have learned that the calumnious and wicked woman who spoke to you some weeks since in the lane by your garden fence is not so utterly bad as you imagined. And now you are mad with jealousy because your husband loves the boy."

To this speech I made no answer.

"You would like to find out the secret of Arthur's parentage?" she resumed, after a minute's silence, in which she was evidently considering how she should proceed. "You say to yourself, 'What can that mystery be? Does it cover any reason which can account for Julian's infatuation with that school-boy dandy?'"

"I should like to know the secret of the child's birth," I admitted.

"Of course you would. What has Mr. Gower told you about it?"

"That the boy—encountered accidentally—was the son of a dear friend of his early days—that a cloud hung over his origin, beneath which lay sorrow and shame. He told me so much, and just nothing more."

"Then you have no idea who the boy's mother was?"

"None. I shrink from inquiring, for I presumed the worst."

"You did well to do so!" was Miss Temple's comment, made bitterly and mockingly. "It is prudent always to infer the worst. Did it not

occur to you that the dear friend of your husband's early days might be the boy's mother, about whom you shrink from inquiring, though you presumed the worst?"

I started from my seat as she said this, and advancing a step toward the sofa on which she sat looked into the cold gentleness of her face.

"You remember, he never told you that the dear friend of his youth was a man."

"You are right, Miss Temple," I said, recovering my self-control and resuming my seat. "What then?"

"Nay—nay—let me ask the questions; you shall answer them. Here is one. Reply to it, Mrs. Gower. Is not that pretty boy the faithful reproduction of your sister Etty, who died years since in the slough of ignominy?"

"Woman!" I exclaimed, starting again from my seat, "why do you torture me with these questions? Tell me what you have to communicate at once, and do not cause me needless suffering. Are you so fond of inflicting pain that you can not deny yourself the pleasure of prolonging my agonies? You who have been tracking my steps for years—you who told me the awful story of my sister's guilt—you who brought Arthur into this house—you who can influence my husband, as well as myself, by some secret and fearful source of knowledge—you know what my answers to your questions must be."

"Enough; you need not entreat me so passionately. You were struck by the likeness of the child to your sister; you know that your husband (although he strives to conceal it from you) is not less struck by the likeness; and in your own heart you believe that this remarkable likeness is the real cause of Mr. Gower's strong and sudden affection for the boy. And this belief annoys you far more than the mere recognition of the fact that you are superseded in your husband's heart. Such was his love for 'Etty'—"

"How do you know that we called her 'Etty'?" I exclaimed.

"Tut!" she laughed. "Is not the name engraved on the memorial in the burial-ground of this parish? Let me go on. You say, 'Such was his love for Etty that even the semblance of her features, in a boy he had never before seen, has that powerful effect upon him'—and you are almost jealous of your dead sister! Now I'll put another thought into your head, and you shall tell me what you think of it. I have heard of men, disappointed in their loves, who drug themselves into temporary forgetfulness of anguish by indulging a base passion for women who *are* women—however much we may scorn and loathe them. Such men, I have been told, are drawn by an irresistible fascination to those who most closely resemble the objects of their luckless wooing. Let us imagine a case. Suppose that Mr. Gower, soon after your sister Etty cruelly broke her troth to him, fell under the influence of a frail girl—in person and in vivacity of manner the exact counterpart of Etty. Suppose that such a woman became his mistress, and the mother of a child dishonored by its birth. Suppose that, growing weary of the vile thralldom of such a woman, Mr. Gower, after a few years' experience of her vicious nature, separated himself from her—making provision for the liberal education of the child. Suppose that, after an interval of years, he learned your forlorn condi-

tion, and in that spirit of Quixotic generosity by which nine fine-hearted men out of every ten mar their fortunes, said, 'I'll make that poor little Tibby Tree my wife, and give her a glimpse of happiness after her long experience of gloom. I have outgrown the age when a man in choosing a wife ranks a pretty face above every other consideration. She will give me children to love; and I have enough confidence in her sweetness of disposition and in her general intelligence to feel sure that she will make me a cheerful fire-side companion.' Suppose him (as he is) married to you, and disappointed in the one anticipation which made him feel it right to indulge his commiseration for the matron of the Sick Children's Hospital. Suppose that, after nearly three years of bitter and fruitless expectancy, he formed the resolution to bring his own dishonored child into his home, and see if you could not be induced to love the lad as your own child, before you discovered him to be his offspring. Suppose that he carried out this scheme; and that, when you saw his eyes grow eloquent of pride at the dandy airs and dashing manliness of our little 'man-of-the-world,' school-boy Arthur, he loved the child not merely because he resembled Etry, but far, far more, *because he was his own son*. What say you to this?"

"That your suggestions are groundless," I answered, as firmly as I could, while faintness made my brain swim, "and utterly false. My heart tells me they are false!"

"What! is it false that your husband married out of pity rather than love?"

I heard this cruel taunt; but I did not reply to it. My womanly pride and delicacy were matters of no consideration by the side of the accusations preferred against my husband. When I replied it was to reject them, not to ward off from myself the strange and embittered woman's scorn.

"You ask me what I think of your suggestions—made under I know not what unworthy motive. I tell you that your insinuations are groundless. I answer now, just as I would have answered if I had never married Julian Gower—*My husband is unalterably, unalterably good*."

"Mrs. Gower," Miss Temple said, after a pause, in an altered voice, the changed tone of which greatly relieved me, "you must remember that I have not put forward my suppositions as any thing but suppositions. Far be it from me to shake your conviction in your husband's goodness—a conviction which I must readily admit I share with you. But I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll take you with me in my carriage, and put you face to face with Arthur Williams's mother—his own mother. Will you come?"

She saw I wavered.

"You can not help nursing a painful curiosity with regard to this child—brought to you under circumstances calculated to arouse your most painful suspicions. If you will trust yourself to me I will convey you to a house in the country on the opposite side of London, where you shall hear the boy's own mother tell you her story and his. And in the course of the evening I'll bring you back to 'The Cedars.'"

"Am I to listen to more black slanders against my dear husband?" I answered, fiercely.

"Be calm, be calm, Mrs. Gower," she replied, her composure still unruffled, as it had been when

she rained down her sarcasms and contempt upon me. "In spite of your angry feelings toward me, *you know that you may trust me*. My name was a household word with you for years ere you ever rested eye on me. Trust to me—when I give you my serious assurance that, while you remain under my charge, neither your credulity nor your suspicion shall be practiced upon by falsehood of any kind. Come with me and speak with Arthur's mother. After you have heard her story you can decide whether it is right for you to receive him into your house."

I considered for a minute, trying honestly to balance the considerations forbidding me to accept her offer against the considerations urging me to avail myself of it. It was a trying crisis. If I consented, my conduct might seem to imply distrust of my husband. If I declined the invitation, I might lose an opportunity of gaining information that would be useful both to him and me.

"Miss Temple," I said, bringing my indecision to an end, "I will accompany you. I will join you in a minute, equipped for a drive in your carriage."

CHAPTER IX.

A MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

MISS TEMPLE had not to wait long for me.

I was speedily assisted into her carriage, and, taking her place by my side, she ordered her coachman to drive as quickly as possible, since she had not a moment to spare. Excited and preoccupied though I was, I kept my ear on the alert to catch her directions to her servants; but instead of inquiring in the customary manner whether they should next proceed, the footman shut the door of the chariot without a word, and the coachman drove off at a rapid speed, clearly in obedience to orders he had already received.

"To what quarter or suburb of the town are we going, Miss Temple?" I inquired, as the horses bore us down the steepest part of Highgate Hill at a swinging trot.

"Oh, some distance; but we sha'n't be long on the road," answered the lady, avoiding the question. "My horses are good ones. We will not talk; we have each of us enough to think about."

That was true. Desirous as I was to ascertain the route we were taking, I soon left off watching for way-marks on the road. That we entered London by a road unknown to me, that we sped swiftly through a western quarter of the town, that we emerged from the clattered pavements into the green country, that we drove for a considerable distance along the banks of the Thames—where the river still deserves the epithet of "silver"—I knew; but more I could not have stated, when the carriage dashed through a gate with a lodge on either side, whirled along a sinuous drive under the branches of a thick plantation, and then suddenly stopped at the postern entrance of a large and well-built mansion.

"Here we are at our journey's end," observed Miss Temple, speaking for the first time since she had peremptorily announced her intention not to converse with me during the drive.

By the sun I judged that it was between six and seven o'clock p.m.; but my whole day had been so strangely disordered, and since I had been in Miss Temple's company I had experienced so much intense excitement, I could not form any conjecture as to the length of time consumed in my transit from "The Cedars" to our destination. Whether the time so employed was half an hour, or an hour, or two hours, or three hours, I could not say. I could have given a better account of what I had been thinking about while, with a sensation of flying through the air, I was borne from the green lanes of Highgate into spacious squares and close streets, and from spacious squares and close streets into green lanes again. The series of "suggestions" with which Miss Temple had brought her morning call to its highest pitch of painful excitement occupied a principal share of my thoughts. That Julian had, in his bitter grief, fallen into unworthy pleasure, was the supposition that stung me most acutely and wounded me most deeply, and for that very reason it was repelled with the most difficulty. Time after time I rejected it as untrue, saying to myself, "It is false—altogether false;" but every time I so hurled it from me it presented itself again—appearing, each time it did so, less repulsive, less incredible, more excusable, more natural. I could not trace each link of suspicion, and fear, and alarm, and hypothesis with which in a few minutes I strung together the romances of many distinct lives—all of which my Julian—lofty, earnest, generous Julian—might have led. But this I know—as the horses galloped in the sunshine on the smooth road, after we had emerged from the town, and as the calm, lustrous river was now concealed from my observation and now revealed to my sight, I mentally formed this decision more than once: "If Arthur is his son," my decision ran, "I will say to Julian, 'Let me be his mother. Now that I know how good a reason you have to love him I shall never again be jealous of him, but will love him dearly as my own, and will rejoice in witnessing your pride in and affection for him.'"

At Miss Temple's invitation I alighted from the chariot, when, entering the mansion by the postern door, she led me straight through the hall and up stairs into a large room, fitted up partly as a library and partly as a boudoir, on the floor immediately above the ground-floor. No servant had met us in the interior of the house. It seemed to me that Miss Temple was in her own dwelling, and yet I had not understood who wished to take me there.

"This is a place," she said, answering my look of surprise and inquiry, "where I always have a room ready for me, so that I can use it whenever I wish for a breath of country air. Is not this a splendid view?"

As she spoke she led me to a window overlooking a noble prospect of that rich conjunction of woodland and farm of which the banks of the Thames are formed. The river ran close to the house—washing, indeed, the outward roots of one of the skirting plantations that surrounded the lawn.

"Just rest your eyes for a minute on that lovely scene, and I will then give you a glimpse of 'an interior,'" observed Miss Temple, going to the back of the apartment and pulling aside a

crimson curtain, which had, till she moved it, concealed a door from my observation. I was curious to see what she was about; but I did not feel justified in watching her operations. So I turned my eyes away, and once more surveyed the magnificent chestnuts and copper beeches on the lawn, and the boats gliding silently up and down the bright, clear river. I might have stood at the open window for five minutes, it might have been a longer time, when a ring at the lodge gate attracted my attention, causing me to take my eyes off the water and look in the opposite direction. In another minute a gentleman walked with a quick, firm step along the hard gravel drive. I heard the step, and recognized it several seconds before the trees permitted me to see distinctly the person to whom it belonged.

"What is the matter, my dear Mrs. Gower?" inquired Miss Temple, running across the room to me, as I uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The gentleman was now in full sight, walking in the middle of the gravel drive.

"See, see!" I said, clutching hold of Miss Temple's hand.

"Exactly; you know your own husband of course," she answered, composedly.

"How comes he here? why comes he here?" I gasped.

"He is a frequent visitor. He has been here six times within the last six days."

"What for?"

"Never mind what he has come here for on former days. I'll tell you what his business here this evening is."

"Quick—tell me."

"You shall see for yourself. Here, come with me."

As she spoke she put her hands upon my shoulders, and conveyed me across the room as if I had been a rebellious school child. I did not resist her, for I was too scared to have purpose or thought of my own.

"Here, stand there!" she said, placing me before the door at the further end of the room, "and tell me what you see."

While these words were leaving her lips she withdrew a silk curtain from before a pane of glass, which was let into the wood-work of the door.

"Look through that pane of glass."

I obeyed.

"You see," whispered Miss Temple, lowering her voice so as not to disturb the occupant of the next room, "you see a room similar to this, but brighter, and more luxuriously furnished. The pink silk blinds are drawn to keep out the light of the setting sun, which bears down on the other side of the house. On a sofa, placed in the middle of the room, you see a lady lying, her face turned away from you and fixed upon the door. Mrs. Gower, that lady is watching the door intently—she is listening for a beloved step on the staircase; it seems to her as though that door would never open. Mrs. Gower, that lady is Arthur's mother. You know whose visit she is expecting. Remain where you are. See the scene out to its close."

For a minute she left me, just to ring a bell on the other side of the room. Then she came back to me again and put her arm kindly and in sisterly fashion round my waist.

I still continued to watch. The door, to which

the lady's face was turned, moved. She started up. The handle moved round and stuck, impeded in its action apparently by a nervous hander. The wood-work of the door shook. In another instant it flew open, and my husband entered the room. The lady, with a scream of agitation, sprang up from the sofa, bounded toward him, caught both his hands in hers, and fell upon her knees at his feet, saying, "Oh, Julian—dear, dear, noble, generous, forgiving Julian! Pardon me, say that you pardon me—and that you will love my boy!"

I saw Julian raise the lady from her abject position. I saw him lift her in his arms, and seal his pardon with a kiss. I heard him say, "Darling, we will never part again. Our boy shall be our chief care. By our love, our sorrows, and our separation, I will hold you a sacred charge—dear to my heart." I heard him give utterance to other strong assurances of love—and then I could hear no more."

A mist came over my eyes, and I fell back into Miss Temple's arms, saying, "Take me away—I feel very ill."

I heard her clear, quiet voice say, "Be calm, be calm! Tell me, Mrs. Gower, do you believe in your husband now? Is your faith unshaken?"

I remember that as she uttered these words she gazed at me with an expression of exultant triumph in her face which I could not interpret.

"Miss Temple—Miss Temple," I said, beating my hands upon my heart—"Julian is unutterably—unalterably good!"

I was unaware I said this. Miss Temple told me afterward that just ere I fainted and fell back unconscious I used those words. And now that I reflect on the past, it is an inexpressible source of satisfaction to me to know that even in my agony of suspicion—when I was still unable to explain the scene I had witnessed—my faith in my dear husband enabled me to cry out, "He is unutterably—unalterably good!"

BOOK VIII.

PART THE THIRD OF A WOMAN'S STORY:—BEING THE NARRATIVE OF OLIVE BLAKE'S ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE COUNCIL OF THREE.

I TOOK a trip of a few months to gain a perfect restoration of my health, and then I resolutely set to work to accomplish the business marked out for me in life.

The more I thought of my position with regard to my husband, and the nature of his conduct toward me, the more convinced I was that Etty Tree had been made the victim of a wicked plot. My sense of my own injury, without (I am thankful to say) embittering me, sharpened my perceptions, and made me look at life in a more business-like and practical manner than I had ever done—the period of my worldly married life being even included in the retrospect. It was the first time in all my existence that I had consciously experienced a wrong. My feelings of justice, always acute in a woman, had in the confined circle of my personal affairs never before been shocked. I had therefore with all my precocity of intelligence, and all my knowledge of the ways and practices of unscrupulous men, taken the world as it came, in trust and without suspicion. Now, however, that a terrible blow had roused me from my blind confidence, I saw my past history with unsealed eyes.

I knew at length that Lord Byfield was a bad and heartless man. This knowledge was the key by which I set to work to read the riddle of his life. It was the light by which I now prepared to examine his gravest, and at the same time his apparently unimportant acts. It made me prejudge the cause in which I was interested, and inspiring me with confidence in his guilt gave me heart to collect evidence, search for motives, and devise theories by which the problem of his dark courses might be solved—in the

same way that a professional advocate tracks crime to its lurking-place.

Knowing Lord Byfield to be utterly bad, it was not difficult for me to point to a motive sufficient to account for his committing the crime with which he stood charged in the court of my secret consciousness. The very large fortune he acquired by marrying me was a sufficient reason for his marrying me without love. As I told my readers at the outset, ours was a *mariage de convenience*; I out of a sentiment of filial duty offering (in the absence of any grave objections to the step) to render him the services of wifely duty, and he accepting my wealth as a consideration why he should confer upon me social distinction by making me his wife. The terms of my dear father's will had been carefully arranged to protect me from the misery of being united to a husband either unworthy of me or distasteful to me. They had expressly directed that I should not give my final decision whether I would become the bride of Arthur Petersham until the completion of my twenty-fifth year, when my future husband would have attained the age of forty. If he wished to possess the wealth of Blake as well as Petersham, he was required to wait till he had attained middle life ere he should enter upon marriage. Of course he, a wicked man (as I knew him to be), had not passed the period between youth and forty years in purity. More than one poor girl had doubtless rued his corrupting passion. At the best, he had only lived according to the ways of men of fashion, a generation and more since. But by the terms of my father's will, if any distinct act of immorality could be proved against him, I was at liberty on completing my twenty-fifth year to reject him, and at the same time to enter on possession of the £200,000 which was

to be his in case of our marriage. It was therefore incumbent on him, if he would win all the stakes on the table at which he was playing, to maintain an unassailable reputation. He could not, therefore, afford to imitate the wicked of his own rank in running a career of open and avowed profligacy. An *esclandre* might cost him a third of a million of money. The consequences of this necessity would be (and, as I afterward discovered, *they were*) most injurious to his character. Without sufficient moral strength to restrain himself from sinful gratification, he would indulge his vicious propensities with every precaution against discovery. He would contract a habit of sinning secretly. He would not only be a child of evil, but his evil would be done darkly, in tortuous and hidden ways. He would by his evil desires and his cupidity be educated to fraud. It was thus I reasoned, and my reasoning led me to see his capability of the crime with which he was charged, and also to discern his motive for committing it.

He had doubtless (I argued to myself) been enamored of Etty Tree's surpassing beauty at Laughton, and had determined to possess himself of it. He had possibly first felt his way to see if he could not accomplish his purpose without indulging the poor girl with a form of marriage; but finding that impracticable, he had consented to make her his wife. Giddy at the prospect of being elevated to share his fortune, the simple creature had not only consented to a secret marriage, but had agreed to leave Laughton under circumstances that would lead the inhabitants of the town to the conclusion that she had fled, not with her betrayer, but with his friend, Major Watchit. Whenever I came to this point of my hypothetical arguments I always experienced a sense of poignant regret that Sir George Watchit was no longer alive. It was clear that he had been Lord Byfield's accomplice in an infamous crime. Etty Tree had herself told me that she left Laughton with him (Mr. Petersham following her up to London), and that she also left the church in which they were married, and traveled to Monaco with him (Mr. Petersham again traveling by a different route, and meeting them in the principality). What had been Sir George Watchit's early history? I knew but little of it. He had been at Eton with Lord Byfield, and since that time they had, up till Sir George's death, been close and most intimate friends. What had been the bond between them? It was not equality of fortune; for while Lord Byfield was at the outset of life the heir-apparent to prodigious wealth, Sir George Watchit had commenced his career a soldier of fortune! Then I recalled all the substantial benefits that had flowed to Sir George Watchit through his connection with my husband; his rapid promotion in India (for he entered the Company's service at an unusually late period of life); the ease with which he obtained leave of absence from the East to enjoy himself in Europe; and, finally, his last advancement to high command, obtained for him (as Lord Byfield had himself told me) by the late Mr. Petersham's influence exercised upon his brother Directors. *These*, then (said I to myself), were some of the accomplice's rewards.

I had only seen Sir George Watchit a few times in all my life, on which occasions I had

been powerfully impressed by his silent force of character, and his singular, I might even say his *comical*, taciturnity. He was an energetic and capable soldier (*that* he had, ere his death, shown the world); and, from the slight recollection I had of him, I was quite able to believe him unscrupulous enough to have acted (for a sufficient consideration) as Lord Byfield's tool in works of secret crime. I knew well that, were he alive, he would be little likely to reveal to me the facts which I wished to discover. Base honor to a base friend, and, above all other considerations, concern for his own reputation, as well as for his security from legal punishment, would seal his lips. Still I could not endure the thought that he had perished without making any sign. There was no longer a chance of extracting evidence from his fear, his penitence, his cupidity, or his singular personal appearance. He had gone from the reach of earthly judgment.

The first work I proposed to myself was to discover not only Etty Tree, but also her sister. The latter might tell me something by which I could the better pursue my search after the former.

Lord Byfield had assured me that he was ignorant of Etty Tree's place of abode; but this statement (although credited by me at the time it was made) I now of course regarded as false. As it was to his interest to conceal the girl, and to keep the place of her concealment known only to himself, he of course would not have told me her abode, since I of all people was the one individual from whom he was most desirous of keeping her. I knew by his own admission that he had on one occasion given her to a physician to take charge of her as a person of disordered intellect. He had doubtless again consigned her to medical care as a lunatic. To any person less intimately acquainted with Lord Byfield than I was the evidence which he could offer of her insanity was conclusive. She persisted in calling herself *his* wife, and had positively entered his residence and alarmed me (the woman he had wedded in the open light of day, and in the presence of the fashionable world) with a statement that he had married her on a particular day in the parish church of a London parish, whereas the carefully kept registers of that church gave her words a complete refutation. What physician would hesitate to give his certificate that a young woman so conducting herself was demented? Therefore, still reasoning with a defect in my chain of evidence, I was as confident that Lord Byfield had immured her in an asylum, as I was confident that he had married her under circumstances which rendered it highly improbable that I should ever be able to trace the deed home to him.

Where was Etty Tree?

This was the question that I, and Dr. Clarges, and my solicitor, Mr. Castleton, were bent upon answering.

My readers have already made the acquaintance of Dr. Clarges. Let me now introduce them to Mr. Castleton. He is an eminent member of his branch of the legal profession, and, like Dr. Clarges, was an intimate and valued friend of my dear father. He it was who superintended the construction of that last will and testament, which led to my unfortunate marriage; and ever since my dear father's death he

has given my affairs his constant attention. A learned and highly cultivated man, Mr. Castleton unites to the caution, accuracy, foresight, and secret vigilance of the *beau-ideal* of a solicitor, the graces of an accomplished and most honorable gentleman. He is not only my business adviser, but my good friend. Let my readers now imagine Mr. Castleton as of sixty years of age, but with the appearance of not having seen more than forty summers; let them imagine him of the middle height, with light-brown hair and whiskers, and a singularly benevolent and courteous countenance, and they will have a sufficiently complete and accurate notion of my legal coadjutor in the work that lay before me.

"In the first place," said Mr. Castleton, when, in Dr. Clarges's presence, I had laid my case before him, "we must proceed with the utmost secrecy; and, in the second place, we must not be disheartened if we have to labor for years without achieving our object."

"Why such a need for secrecy?" asked the doctor.

"Because," replied the lawyer, "if we do not work quietly, we draw upon ourselves the attention of Lord Byfield. Our assumption (favored, I confess, *by some*, but far from supported *by all* the evidence I could desire) is that Lord Byfield has been guilty of at least one grave offense against the laws of his country. We assume also that the young woman we wish to discover has been consigned by him to a lunatic asylum, or some other place of security. Now, if our assumptions are correct, should Lord Byfield learn that we are endeavoring to obtain access to the young woman, there can be no doubt that he would do his utmost to defeat our purpose, and secure himself from every chance of detection."

"But, surely," I said, "Mr. Castleton, it ought to be easy for us to discover if a particular person is confined in any public asylum, or in any private house registered for the reception of the insane. The houses themselves any how are known."

"True, and under ordinary circumstances," returned the lawyer, "it would be comparatively easy to discover whether a particular person was confined in any one of them, if there were no necessity for avoiding observation in the prosecution of search. For instance, we could go from one house to another, and with the assistance of a Commissioner of Lunacy search throughout all the lunatic asylums in the land for this missing girl. But to do so would be simply to say to Lord Byfield, 'My lord, we are bent upon proving that you are guilty of bigamy.' You must remember that we are dealing with a very powerful personage, a man possessed of means to influence those whom you might deem placed above the reach of corruption. We must be very cautious. At present we may not let a single person into our counsel besides ourselves."

"But still, Castleton," observed the doctor, pettishly, "it remains for you to chalk out *some* line of action. We can't sit still. It is all well to say what we *mayn't* do. Can't you tell us what we *may* do?"

Mr. Castleton was silent for a couple of minutes, during which time he tore a sheet of newspaper in minute pieces, and scattered them on the floor of my library—not altogether to my

satisfaction, for I have always been known as a particularly neat person.

"I'll tell you what we must do," said the lawyer, after a pause.

"Good—now for it," said the doctor.

"We must commence, and steadily carry out by ourselves, a search of the following nature, without the assistance of agents of any kind. Of course our first object is to ascertain if the young woman be in a mad-house. Now it is easy to get a list of all the asylums in the kingdom. I'll send you such a list, doctor, this very night; and I'll send you one also, Lady By—(I beg your pardon, I forgot)—I'll send you one also, Miss Blake. Now, into several of the most expensive private asylums, where a person of Lord Byfield's rank would be most likely to confine such a young woman as Miss Tree (for considerations of *rank*, Miss Blake, are regarded even by the patrons of mad-houses), I can obtain admission. I have frequently to send a patient to one or the other of them. Possibly I have at the present time persons in whom I am professionally interested detained in some of them. Any how, I can get admission to them."

"Good," said Dr. Clarges, rubbing his hands with satisfaction; "now I see how I can be of some use in the hunt."

"You, doctor," continued Mr. Castleton, "can obtain admission to many more. Your professional reputation will not only introduce you to their keepers, but will secure you a courteous reception from them. Now you and I, doctor, must get into as many of these prisons as we can, and, by the exercise of a little pardonable artifice, obtain an inspection of the lists of inmates without letting our object transpire."

"Yes," said the doctor, more gravely, "it will be a tiresome task."

"No doubt about that," responded Mr. Castleton, quietly. "We shall have to take many long journeys into the different counties of England, as well as spend many a day in visiting the metropolitan asylums, ere we shall be able to say that we have done all that lies in our power in this line of inquiry; and perhaps, after all, it may turn out that we shall find our labors have been misdirected."

"Oh, you good, dear men!" I exclaimed, "don't fear the labor. Look at the *end*. What is the toil compared with *that*?"

"There are more difficulties in our way," observed Mr. Castleton, "than even you can see, Miss Blake."

"What are they? tell me the worst."

"The young woman may be confined in an asylum—but under a wrong name."

"Good Heavens!" I said, "what a suggestion! How should we discover her then?"

"Humph!" replied the lawyer. "Personal inspection. We shall have to disguise you, and take you about with us; for you have seen the girl."

"I should remember her any where," I answered, warmly.

"She may," continued Mr. Castleton, "be in confinement, and under medical care as a lunatic; but not in a house registered for the reception of the insane."

"May she?"

"Lord Byfield," quietly went on my terrible solicitor, "in such a matter would regard money

as an affair of no consideration. He may possibly have a physician in his pay to whom he gives £2000 a year for keeping charge of this young person, in his own private residence."

"Oh, Mr. Castleton!" I exclaimed, "how should we discover her in such a case? And it is exactly what Lord Byfield actually did with that physician at Nice."

"Well, well," returned Mr. Castleton, smiling, "don't be alarmed. We must hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst. And to console you, I may say that I hardly think Lord Byfield would adopt such a plan in this country. It would be attended with too much hazard, and rouse suspicion of him—at least in the mind of one individual."

"Castleton," said Dr. Clarges, "come and talk this matter over with me to-night, and then we'll settle how we must proceed to action. I must now be off to see my patients. Good-morning, Olive. God help you, dear!"

Mr. Castleton also wished me a valedictory good-morning; but ere he took his departure he added—"and besides entering on this long, tedious search, Miss Blake, I will forthwith institute inquiries after the young person's sister, Miss Tabitha Tree."

It is worthy of remark that Mr. Castleton entertained an angry feeling, a sort of sub-resentment, toward the poor girl in whom I had so lively an interest. It was a long time ere he ceased to speak of her habitually as "the young person," or "the young woman." But the time came when he altered his opinion of her.

CHAPTER II.

A GOOD OMEN.

For many months (they seemed to me *very* long months) I had to wait without advancing a single step in the journey before me. Dr. Clarges and Mr. Castleton were too much occupied with urgent professional affairs to be able to visit me frequently; but whenever they came to Fulham (where, with Aunt Wilby for a companion, I resumed the life of my most quiet days previous to my marriage), they assured me that they were devoting all their leisure moments to my service.

"You were patient, Olive," the doctor said to me frequently, "under heavy afflictions. You must now bear patiently the irksomeness of delay."

"I will, dear doctor," I answered; "but every day I learn how much harder it is to bear a comparatively light trial with equanimity than it is to endure a graver evil with fortitude."

At the expiration of five months, however, Mr. Castleton made his appearance at Fulham with such an expression of serene satisfaction in his countenance that my first words to him were, "You bring sunshine with you, Mr. Castleton. Good news is written in your face, but I can not read it; you must tell me."

"Don't raise your hopes; for if you do, I shall have to begin by throwing cold water upon them," replied my solicitor. "Lady clients are most agreeable to a man of business as a change. Their gratitude is quite refreshing to lawyers, who are too much in the habit of regarding their

avocations solely with a view to profit. But they are so oversanguine that they are continually subjecting themselves to unnecessary disappointment, and, as a consequence, subjecting their professional agents to a certain amount of mortification—so don't let your hopeful imagination run away with you."

"I will not. But what is the intelligence?"

"To begin—I have not yet been able to get a trace of 'the young person.'"

"Well?" I put in, as my heart sunk.

"But I have discovered her sister."

"Indeed—where is she?"

"I have already," continued Mr. Castleton, telling his story in his own way, "made several inquiries about her, and they have resulted in my entertaining a very favorable opinion of her. I should say that Miss Tabitha Tree is a lady deserving our deepest commiseration; that she is a truly excellent woman."

Mr. Castleton paused. If he had a fault it was a mischievous pleasure in playing with the feelings of others, when he was about to make an important communication.

"Since we first discussed this business I have made a visit to Laughton, the town where 'the young person' and her sister kept a school—and to Farnham Cobb, a secluded parish, in which they were brought up by their grandfather, the vicar of the parish. I there made some important discoveries relative to Miss Tabitha Tree. The principal solicitor of Laughton, who is the steward of the important property known as the Laughton Abbey estate, was fortunately not unknown to me. Indeed, I may say that we have for many years been connected in business. When I was a young man, more in want of clients than I am at present, I carried on an agency business; that is to say (for the term needs to be explained to you), I transacted for country solicitors business to which they could not attend without living in town. Agency business to a London solicitor means business of which he undertakes all the responsibility, and nearly all the labor, and for which he obtains only half the fees legally due for the work done. Mr. Gurley was one of my agency clients. On achieving success in my profession I relinquished agency work, retaining, however, the business of those of my provincial clients who had shown me consideration and liberality, and who expressed a decided wish to retain my services. Among my old agency clients Mr. Gurley is one. My visit to Laughton therefore took me directly to him. I knew him well (as young men, we were articled pupils at the same office). However, I did not think it right to let him altogether into my confidence. I told him I was anxious to inform myself of all particulars relative to the history of Miss Tabitha Tree and her sister, more especially of all particulars relative to the departure of the latter from Laughton. His story, of course, was that 'the young woman' had left Laughton under painful and disgraceful circumstances with Major (afterward Sir George) Watchit. He described her as singularly beautiful, but petted and spoiled by overindulgence in childhood, and by the attentions showered upon her by the Laughton gentility. Till her scandalous flight from Laughton 'Cottage' Mr. Gurley had deemed her a girl naturally amiable, and devoid of wicked propensities, just as he also deemed her devoid of

the high principle and rare unselfishness of her elder sister. Lady Caroline Petersham's notice of this unsophisticated girl (in Mr. Gurley's opinion) turned her head, and was a chief cause of her ruin. Of the elder Miss Tree Mr. Gurley spoke in very different terms. 'Many people called her plain,' he said, 'but she never appeared plain either to me or my wife. No competent observer could call her an ordinary-looking woman, for extraordinary goodness was expressed by every line of her face. But you shall hear what my wife says about her.' I dined that day with Mr. Gurley, and after dinner he told his wife that I was anxious to gain information about Miss Tree, and especially to hear her opinion of her. 'Then, Sir,' cried the honest lady, flushing up with generous excitement, 'let me tell you, that if there is an angel on earth it is little Tibby Tree.' On my pressing the kind lady to give me some reasons for her high opinion of this Miss Tree, she answered with tears in her eyes, and much emotion, 'Sir, I know much about Tibby Tree that I could not tell you, even if you were my most intimate friend, instead of being almost a stranger to me. But this I can say: she is the most unselfish woman I have ever known in the whole course of my days; and I know that from the day she came to Laughton till the day she left it in sorrow (*not* disgrace, Sir—shame, real shame, has nothing to do with her!) the one chief thought of her heart was to work the happiness of that heartless, vain, little minx of a sister who plunged her in misery!'

"Go on, Mr. Castleton," I said, so interested in the account that I had ceased to be impatient for its termination.

Mr. Castleton went on. A poet could not have drawn a more beautiful picture of all he had learned to Tibby Tree's advantage. He gave me the minutest particulars of his trip into "the corn country." The care and ingenuity with which he had carried on his investigations were absolutely wonderful. From the gossip of the villagers, and the admissions of Mr. Gurley, he had arrived at the conclusion that Tibby Tree had conceived a pure and lofty love for Julian Gower, who, unconscious of the treasure he had won, centred his affections on the pretty face of her sister. He found out that the Gurleys maintained an epistolary correspondence with this excellent woman; but they were either ignorant of her place of abode, or steadily refused to impart their knowledge of it to him.

"I impressed on Gurley," said Mr. Castleton, bringing the first part of his communications to a conclusion, "my anxiety that my name should be kept a profound secret to any curious inhabitants of Laughton, who might wish to know who the stranger was who had been over to Farnham Cobb, gossiping to the villagers about the late vicar's grand-daughters. I told him frankly that it was not in my power to reveal to him at present my reason for wanting to trace out the two sisters; and he, as a sound business man, appreciated my caution and secrecy. On him I can rely; and I am quite confident that no one in 'the corn country' will suspect that the excursionist who sought news of Tabitha and Annette Tree in the haunts of their childhood was a London solicitor."

"Well, now, *do* go on," I cried, getting impatient again.

Mr. Castleton paused, refreshed himself with a glass of water, and then recommenced: "I returned three months since from 'the corn country' more anxious than ever to discover 'the young person's' sister. I caused a trusty agent of mine to search every directory in the kingdom for her name. I inquired of all the principal haberdashers, milliners, and shirt-makers in London, if they had ever given work to a person of her name. It would weary you if I enumerated all the efforts I made unavailingly to unearth her. Of course I did not advertise for her. Such a step might have attracted Lord Byfield's attention, and made him suspect that the persons anxious to discover Tabitha Tree were really searching for her sister."

"But how did you discover her at last?"

"By pure accident."

"How?"

"By pure accident. A fortnight since a clergyman called at my office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and sent up his card. I was busy, but still did not like to refuse a clergyman, who had assured one of my clerks that he wanted to see me on urgent business. So the caller was admitted. He was a well-dressed, personable man. 'A new client,' thought I. But not a bit of it. He sat down on my own peculiar chair, as if the room belonged to him, and taking a packet of prospectuses from his pocket, coolly informed me that he wanted me to subscribe to the 'Hospital for Sick Children in Marchioness Street.' (That's the way in which the enthusiastic promoters of Charitable Institutions tout for them nowadays.) 'Sir,' I said, rudely enough, immediately I learned his business, 'what charity I do in this world I do myself, and without the aid of any of the mushroom hospitals that infest the streets of London, and absorb the funds of the benevolent, without doing any appreciable good to the poor. I am a subscriber already to two large hospitals, with medical schools attached to them, and I must decline throwing away £5 on a trumpery infirmary, got up in all probability to bring an obscure physician or two into public notice. I am very busy. My time is very valuable; and therefore I must beg you to say "good-by" to me instantly.' Most men would have been abashed by this speech. But far from being put out of countenance, the reverend gentleman smiled at me, opened my own case of note-paper, and taking from it a sheet of paper said, 'That's right, Sir, I like to be received in this way; I shall get £10 out of you. Now, as your time is valuable, be quick about it, and write a check on this slip of paper at once.' This audacity didn't amuse me. I felt myself getting into a lively rage—quite a rage, Miss Blake. Doubtless the importunate gentleman saw I was not to be trifled with, for he suddenly changed his manner, rose from my chair, and pushing one of the hospital prospectuses into my hand said: 'Well, Sir, I won't disturb you: but you shouldn't speak so harshly to a clergyman who, at the worst, is only a little too zealous in behalf of a public undertaking.' I was so far mollified by this speech that I took the proffered prospectus and glanced my eye over the first sheet before crumpling it up and putting it in my pocket. 'Here, Sir,' I cried, calling the clergyman back, 'wait an instant—I apologize for my rudeness; but a lawyer in the middle of term may be excused for being a little

fierce with strangers who enter his office and consume his time to no purpose. Here, Sir, take your check. Good-morning.' The man took up my check; but, confound his impudence, he could not leave the room without saying, triumphantly, 'I told you so, Sir. Here's your check for £10, written on the very same piece of paper that I took from your case.' I am not an irritable man, Miss Blake; but really if he had not been a clergyman I don't think we should have parted without more words. 'Never mind,' I said to myself, taking out the crumpled prospectus from the pocket of my coat-tail, 'that paper is more worth having than my check!'

"Why, what was on it?" I asked.

"Look," he answered, taking the same crumpled prospectus from his pocket once more, and laying it out on the table before me—"look! do you see the matron's name?"

I followed his finger to the point indicated, and there, to my inexpressible surprise and gratification, I saw among the names of the permanent officers and servants of the Hospital for Sick Children in Marchioness Street these words in full capital letters: "Matron—Tabitha Tree."

"Bravo!" I cried, with genuine exultation.

"There! there! we've unearthed her!" said Mr. Castleton, looking at me with the keen sense of pleasure which a player experiences when he wins a point in a difficult and important game.

"We must put ourselves in communication with her at once," I exclaimed, impetuously.

"No," said Mr. Castleton, recovering in a moment all his ordinary composure, "that would be useless, and to do so might only be to show our game to others. Mr. Gurley assured me that Miss Tabitha Tree knew no more than he or I did about the fate of her sister. It would therefore do us no good, and would only pain her, to show her that her retreat is discovered, and to cross-question her about the points on which we are already sufficiently informed. My trip to Laughton put me in possession of every thing that she can tell us. We must let her keep quiet where she is. She is a card in our hands, and it is possible that one day she will turn out a trump-card for us. Let us be cautious, and leave what is well already alone in that quarter. Caution! caution!—any how, if I am not mistaken, we know more than Mr. Gurley of Laughton."

This last reflection evidently gave my solicitor great satisfaction.

"But," said I, with a painful doubt, "may there not be two Tabitha Trees? After all, this may not be our one."

"The name is singular," said Mr. Castleton, sententially.

"True; but that singularity does not amount to proof."

"I'll tell you something else. As soon as I had reason to take an interest in this Children's Hospital I looked at the names of its supporters, and among the names of the lady patronesses I found the name of Mrs. Monk of Clapton, a good and charitable woman, in whose family Mrs. Castleton's present housekeeper lived some years since. At my request Mrs. Castleton questioned our housekeeper about her former mistress, and the result of her questions was the discovery that Miss Tabitha Tree, the present matron of the Marchioness Street Hospital, entered Mrs. Monk's service as a nursery-governess, at a date

that must have been very shortly after your Etty Tree's flight from Laughton. In Mrs. Monk's family the housekeeper and the nursery-governess were on terms of equality, and consequently my wife's housekeeper had good means of ascertaining all that Miss Tree allowed the world to know about herself. It appears, then, that when she entered Mrs. Monk's family she had only recently arrived in London from the country. She was quite ignorant of the topography, public buildings, and amusements of the town; but she never manifested any curiosity about them, all her care being apparently directed to the welfare of the children placed under her charge. To my housekeeper's inquiries she admitted that she had passed all her previous life in an out-of-the-way province; or, as my informant expressed it, 'right in the country.' But she was *very close about her past life, would never talk about the places in which she had lived before coming to Mrs. Monk's, and always kept herself to herself.* She was an excellent nursery-governess, and much esteemed by Mrs. Monk, but in the opinion of the housekeeper was 'a mystery.'"

"All these facts," I said, when Mr. Castleton paused, "go far to accomplish the work of identification, but still they are not conclusive."

The doubt having once risen in my mind as to the identity of Tabitha Tree of Laughton and Tabitha Tree of the Marchioness Street Hospital, it was not to be removed by any ordinary sort of circumstantial evidence.

"Well, then, I will tell you something else," said Mr. Castleton.

He always kept the best part of a communication to the last, and I felt sure that it was now about to be revealed. The smile of my lawyer's face told me so.

"When I was at Laughton," he continued, "I saw her portrait—a rather well-executed crayon sketch, which a traveling artist had taken of her for Mrs. Gurley's pleasure. I remarked that portrait, examining it carefully, and laying up all its peculiarities in my memory. Well, yesterday I happened to be passing along Marchioness Street, when it occurred to me that I should like to inspect the interior of the hospital to which I had so recently contributed £10. So I knocked at the door, and on the porter opening it, I stated that I was a subscriber to the hospital, and I should wish to look at the wards. From the man's countenance it was clear that my application was unusual; but he went to the matron's room, and brought her to me. The moment that I saw her *I knew her to be the lady whose portrait I had seen at Laughton*, in Mrs. Gurley's drawing-room. It only took me a few minutes to inspect the wards, but during that short time I saw enough of Miss Tree—in the kindness of her tone to the unhappy little patients, in the delight their countenances evinced when she approached them, and in her graceful simplicity to me, to be sure that the Gurleys had not overrated her good qualities. She manifested a little curiosity about my name, and asked me if I would not make an entry in the visitor's note-book, to the effect that I had inspected the wards, and been gratified by what I saw there. But, of course, I did not comply. It was my business to learn who she was—not to let out who I was. Now, Miss Blake, have we unearthed her?"

"We have unearthed her!" I answered em-

phatically. "Oh, Mr. Castleton, you wonderful man! You seem to know something about every thing and every body. At present, we can not say what good this discovery will do us. But any how it is an omen—a bright omen for the future!"

"Exactly so, Miss Blake—it is a bright omen! We had just come to that point when we sorely needed a little refreshing encouragement, and now we have it."

But though I saw clearly the propriety of not disturbing Tibby Tree in the retreat she had chosen for herself, I could not rest content without doing something to aid her in her charitable undertaking.

Mr. Castleton's inquiries into the system and object of the hospital convinced him that it was a most excellent institution. Its only want was a want of funds; and that want, after much consideration, I determined to supply. I was no longer the rich woman I had once been; but I still had the use of my villa at Fulham, the land round it, and the interest of the £50,000 in the hands of my trustees. In all I had a well-appointed residence, and a little more than £2000 per annum. Precluded as I was from society by my domestic troubles, I therefore still had ample wealth; and I resolved to devote a portion of it to protection of the poor sick children of London. The solemn and sacred memory of my own darling babe, lying in its last rest in Burstead church, encouraged me to give such aid to Tibby Tree. I therefore directed Mr. Castleton at once to take measures to put into the hands of the hospital committee £1000, on condition they forthwith enlarged the hospital and increased their number of beds. I also promising to give the charity a sufficient annual income to support the new wards and a part of their inmates.

The details of this arrangement I left to Mr. Castleton; and he, persevering in his plan of caution, paid my contribution in to the committee under the name of "Grace Temple;" whereupon they added another huge, dusty old mansion to the original domicile of the charity, and in compliment to their benefactress named it after her, "Grace Temple."

I more than once recreated myself with walking down the pavement of Marchioness Street, and with looking at the front of the hospital I had benefited; but I neither entered its walls, nor set eyes on Tibby Tree, till about two years had elapsed since the date of my benefaction.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT IT POINTED TO.

AFTER another ten months, when as I sat in my garden at Fulham, with bees and butterflies making music and brisk life around, and with the silent traffic of the river aiding the sunlight and the shade to detain me in a luxurious day-dream, Dr. Clarges drove up to the door, and alighting from his phaeton came across the lawn to the corner where I was sitting.

Mr. Castleton had brought down the first game in our long search; and now Dr. Clarges was to show that he also was a good sportsman.

"My dear," the kind old man said, "I came up last night from Berkshire."

"From Berkshire?"

"Ay, and you must be prepared to-morrow by nine o'clock A.M. to start with me on an excursion down into Berkshire."

"What!" I exclaimed, starting up from my chair—the butterflies, and the odoriferous flowers, and the silent silver Thames, and my happy day-dream all driven out of my head, "you have not discovered Ety Tree?"

"That remains to be proved; but I have discovered at the Belle Vue Lunatic Asylum, just nine miles distant from Reading, a lady named Annette Watchit."

"Annette Watchit?"

"Ay! And if I am not mistaken we shall find that Annette Watchit is Ety Tree."

"Dear doctor, don't be slow. Tell me every thing in an instant."

"Nay, I can't do that. You made a heart-rending story of how Castleton tortured you when he revealed to you his discovery of Tibby Tree; now it is my turn to play with your feelings. But I will be as brief as possible. To begin, then: two months since there came to my hands a check for £100 drawn by Dr. Hankinson, the proprietor of the Belle Vue Asylum, upon 'Petersham and Blake,' of Lombard Street. I had no personal knowledge whatever of Dr. Hankinson, but I knew him by repute to be one of the most successful mad-doctors in the kingdom. His establishment, called 'Belle Vue,' is a magnificent country mansion—one of the best houses, indeed, in all Berkshire—and stands in a fine park, through which a river, well-known to anglers, takes its course. His rates of charge for the care of patients I also knew to be very high—varying between £300 and £400 per annum. The check of which I speak was passed into my hands by a Berkshire tradesman, and roused the suspicion of my already suspicious temper. 'A check,' I said, 'for £100 on Petersham and Blake! The sum would be exactly the fee for one quarter of a year's care of one of Dr. Hankinson's first-class patients.' Of course, by itself, the circumstance was not worthy a moment's thought. Doubtless many of the wealthy persons who had confided insane relatives to Dr. Hankinson's care kept accounts with 'Petersham and Blake,' and it was quite natural that any such person (to relieve himself of unnecessary thought and trouble about a painful matter) should empower Dr. Hankinson to draw to the amount of his fees upon his London banker. Such an arrangement is not only explicable, but accords with everyday usage. It was credible that Dr. Hankinson drew quarterly a hundred-pound note from several different London bankers, who had received directions to honor his checks to that or even a far greater amount. Still the occurrence was enough to put me on the alert, and to make me determine that I would on the first opportunity pay Dr. Hankinson a visit. Without much difficulty I found a physician who could give me a suitable letter of introduction to Dr. Hankinson; when, just as I was looking out for two vacant days on which to go down to Berkshire, I fortunately was consulted by the family of Lord Oakfield as to a proper asylum for the confinement of that unhappy and notorious nobleman. Knowing that Dr. Hankinson in his spacious establishment received patients of both sexes, I suggested 'Belle Vue' as a fit place, and offered, as

I happened to be going into Berkshire in the course of a few days, to speak to Dr. Hankinson on the subject. This offer was, I need not say, accepted, and I went down to 'Belle Vue' with two introductions to Dr. Hankinson's favor—namely, a letter from one of his most intimate friends, and a mission to place in his hands an aristocratic and opulent patient. I think that the latter was the more effectual.

"Of course Dr. Hankinson was familiar with my professional position, and was well pleased to receive as a guest one so well able to assist him in his vocation. After inspecting all the arrangements for the doctor's patients (and the arrangements I must say are admirable—really no one would object to be mad if he was secure of being sent to such a delightful place as 'Belle Vue') I found myself sitting down to an excellent dinner with Dr. Hankinson's wife and daughters. Dr. Hankinson and I were the only gentlemen of the party; and when the ladies left us we had a little confidential chat over some Burgundy, that really, Olive, is almost as good as yours.

"What is the history," I said, "of that young melancholy creature you spoke to, near the fountains, half an hour before dinner, just as we left the aviary? You remember her? slight figure, and delicate face (full of sadness), with a profusion of golden hair?"

"Ah," said Dr. Hankinson, filling his glass (I noticed that he drank rather freely), "that's a painful and very singular case. That beautiful girl was some years since Sir George Watchit's toy—either mistress or wife (there is some doubt whether he married her), and she is the victim of a most extraordinary hallucination. Sir George Watchit lived with the girl abroad, in Monaco and elsewhere, and when he grew tired of her, left her and her babe and went back to the East. Her madness takes as strange a form as I have ever known insanity take. Sir George Watchit's intimate friend was Mr. Petersham, now Lord Byfield, the eminent capitalist; and when Sir George was bent on deserting this poor girl Lord Byfield took her part, and urged his friend to treat her honorably. Sir George, however, took his own heartless course, and left the girl in Italy bereft of her senses. She almost died; but Lord Byfield humanely took charge of her, and saw her restored from the danger of death, but not restored to her original soundness of intelligence. Grateful to Lord Byfield for his kindness in taking her part against her betrayer and deserter, she conceived the preposterous notion that she had never lived as the wife of Major Watchit, but was actually married to Lord Byfield. A more painful position for Lord Byfield (Mr. Petersham he then was) can not be imagined. She had no friends who would naturally be looked to to take custody of her. So Lord Byfield very properly and liberally provided for her care abroad until he should hear from Sir George Watchit in India. But she soon contrived to escape from her place of detention, traveled (Heaven knows how!) through France, and positively burst into Lord Byfield's house in Grosvenor Square, shortly after his marriage (which, by-the-by, has turned out badly), and frightened the lady of the house by telling her that she was the victim of a *bigamist*. She even stated the very church in which she asserted she

and Mr. Petersham had been married. In that she showed the imprudence of madness, just as in other particulars of her story she displayed the prudence which often marks the insane. A reference to the church register proved that her assertion was only an astounding fabrication of *dementia*; and it was just as easily ascertained that she had been Sir George Watchit's mistress. Well, of course such a person could not be allowed to go at large. Mrs. Petersham was already expecting the birth of an heir to the vast fortunes of "Petersham and Blake;" and a repetition of the alarm she had already undergone might be the cause of lamentable disaster. Under these circumstances, therefore, the beautiful demented creature was, of course, captured and sent to me."

"By Lord Byfield—that is, Mr. Petersham?" I put in.

"Oh no," was the answer, much to my surprise; "the order consigning her to my care was signed by the Right Honorable Sir Charles Norton."

"What!" I said, "by our present Secretary of State?"

"The same," answered Dr. Hankinson. "You seem surprised, but there is no occasion for it. Lord Byfield of course would not send me the lunatic, on his own responsibility, since he was so peculiarly pointed at by her madness. So he spoke on the subject to Sir Charles Norton, and that statesman, whose integrity and loftiness of purpose are beyond even the stabs of calumny, ordered me to take charge of Annette Watchit. Sir Charles had also some personal acquaintance with Sir George Watchit, and had therefore private means of knowing the nature of the girl's relations to Sir George."

"Whose names were appended to the medical certificate?" I inquired.

"Really I forget—but if you are curious I'll go to my library and get the order and the certificate for your inspection."

"I expressed a moderate wish to see 'the papers' mentioned—a wish decided enough in its expression to make him leave the table and forthwith produce the papers, and at the same time not sufficiently pronounced to rouse suspicion on his part.

"The order and medical certificate were both in proper form. The two physicians, certifying the insanity of the patient, were men of high character—Dr. Atkins and Dr. Teesdale. I am familiar with their handwriting, and there is no doubt that the signatures are genuine. In the order, too, there was nothing to remark upon, save that the space in the ordinary form, where the person ordering the detention of the lunatic is required to state his relationship or position to the insane person, so committed by the order to custody, was filled up with these words in Sir Charles Norton's handwriting: 'I am in no way whatever related to the lunatic, Annette Watchit, but I act in behalf of a personal friend, now in foreign parts, whose wife I believe the lunatic to be.—C. N.' I know Sir Charles Norton's handwriting as well as I do the writing of Drs. Atkins and Teesdale, and I have no hesitation in saying that the signature of the order is his.

"Now, Olive, you have heard my story. Do you not think I am justified in suspecting that

Annette Watchit will turn out to be Annette Tree?"

"Dr. Clarges," I said, when I had heard this astounding communication, "Sir Charles Norton may have signed the order, but it was done at my husband's—I mean, Lord Byfield's—request. I remember that three days after I told my husband of Ety Tree's visits to me in Grosvenor Square, Sir Charles Norton dined with us, and Lord Byfield led me on to tell him—as a very old and intimate friend—of the vexation I had undergone during the few previous weeks. I now remember, as clearly as if it happened only yesterday, that as we dropped the topic Lord Byfield and Sir Charles Norton exchanged glances, and Lord Byfield said, significantly, '*She won't repeat her visit.*' Those glances and those words were the first cause for my suspecting that Ety Tree had been reconsigned to medical care by Lord Byfield."

"Indeed—that is most important, for it establishes an association in this particular business between Lord Byfield and Sir Charles Norton. But Sir Charles is a most honorable man."

"True, doctor," I answered, "but he has been imposed upon by the same considerations which led Dr. Atkins and Dr. Teesdale—also honorable men, and of unassailable reputations—to sign the medical certificate."

"And, by Jove! Olive," Dr. Clarges exclaimed, with unusual warmth, "he might well be so imposed upon! I am sure that had I been in the place of either Dr. Atkins or Dr. Teesdale I should have done as they did. And after all, apart from our positive convictions, based more on suspicion than any thing else, what have we to offer as proof that she is not insane?"

"Any how we have arrived at this," I answered, "that Lord Byfield and Sir Charles Norton acted in concert; and that when Lord Byfield told me he had searched, and was still searching, *unavailingly*, for 'the mad girl'—he told me that which was utterly untrue. What does that *lie* point to? Answer me, Dr. Clarges. What does it point to?"

"Well, it looks awkward," said the doctor, evasively.

"Dr. Clarges—I'll tell you what it points to. *It points to guilt.*"

"I am afraid it does."

"Dr. Clarges—I *hope* it does! Why do you say that you are *afraid* it does?"

"My dear girl," said the doctor, "I can not help remembering what you would be in the eyes of the world if you should succeed in proving that Lord Byfield had done you the most cruel injury a man can do a woman."

"Never mind that, my dear old friend," I said, feeling, however, warm tears rise in my eyes; "I should then only be in reality what I now call myself—*Olive Blake.*"

CHAPTER IV.

BELLE VUE.

As we traveled down into Berkshire Dr. Clarges and I had time to discuss more fully the nature of Ety Tree's position at Belle Vue, and the probability of our being able to induce Dr. Hankinson to surrender his patient into our custody. My wish was to take her back with us

to Fulham; but Dr. Clarges and Mr. Castleton both foresaw many contingencies which would render it unadvisable for me to do so. If Dr. Hankinson should be opposed to our taking possession of her, we clearly could not compel him to give her up to us without using measures which would put an end to all possibility of keeping our movements unknown to Lord Byfield. Notwithstanding the exposure of the trial, Lord Byfield was still a personage highly respected by the world. The scandal of the scene in Westminster Hall had blown over, and those who bore it in mind only regarded it as one of those "awkward affairs" which were too common, a generation since, to cover those concerned in them with lasting obloquy. As a financial power in the country his position had greatly improved during the last year and a half; and though society severely censured him (for "nine days") for his conduct to me, it had learned to be charitable to the peer and the powerful capitalist. It was true, he and his wife lived apart from each other by an amicable arrangement, but (said society) it would never do to put every man under a ban who did not find it agreeable to live with a wife united to him by a *marriage de convenance*. Moreover, Sir Charles Norton, who was responsible for Ety's confinement, was still the intimate friend of Lord Byfield. If, therefore, Dr. Hankinson should inform the Secretary of State that an attempt was being made to remove Ety Tree from Belle Vue, there could be no doubt that the intelligence would be promptly conveyed to his lordship.

"I do not see how we can get hold of her without letting Dr. Hankinson in some measure into our confidence, and inducing him to be a sort of negative coadjutor in our arrangements," observed Dr. Clarges.

"To what motives would he be most likely to prove obedient?"

"To interested ones," returned the doctor, curtly.

"Indeed?"

"Ay, Hankinson has a high reputation; but successful as he has been in his department of my profession, I know that he is to some extent an embarrassed man. His establishment at 'Belle Vue' is necessarily very expensive. For the accommodation of his aristocratic patients he has to maintain horses, equipages, and servants sufficient for the dignity of a duke. Moreover, he is a man of costly pleasures. He hunts and visits on terms of equality with the leading county families of his part of Berkshire, and he amuses himself with the turf and high play. I do not mean to say that he is running on the road to unavoidable ruin; but he is unquestionably improvident, and has to jump at every chance of getting a new patient. Indeed I know that in some cases he has lowered his terms rather than have any portion of his house unoccupied."

"The more reason why he would be unwilling to give up a quiet patient who troubles him but little, and pays him £400 a year."

"Well, so it is a reason, viewed from one point."

The doctor said these words with such a peculiar accent and significance that I started in my seat, and said, "Surely you don't think of offering him a *bride*?"

"Well, Miss Olive," answered Dr. Clarges with a smile, "if I do, I sha'n't call it by that name."

"Speak more plainly."

"I will. Dr. Hankinson (agreeable and accomplished man though he is) is a determined, perhaps I might say an unscrupulous, man of business. He will do completely and thoroughly his duty to all patients committed to his care. That is to say, he will cure them if he can. But he will take every possible means to get more of them. Now he is doubtless this very day saying to himself, 'It is very convenient to have one of the vacant places in my house filled up by Lord Oakfield; and I like my new patient all the better because he is sent to me by a successful and fashionable physician, with whom I have previously had no dealings, and who, if he likes, can send me one or two more patients every year. I must be careful what I do with Dr. Clarges. I must take care to please him.'"

"Of course. I see."

"Suppose, then, that I say to Dr. Hankinson, 'Etty Tree no longer stands in need of your surveillance. She never required it from a medical point of view, but simply that she might not annoy a particular lady, who, far from wishing the young woman to be confined in your asylum any longer, wishes to make her a member of her own family. I could easily make you give her into my hands, for I can produce the girl's next of kin, who would engage that the hallucination under which she labors should never be again a cause of annoyance to Lord Byfield. But compulsory measures would entail a certain amount of publicity, which I am especially anxious to avoid. Now your engagement with Sir Charles Norton is to keep her in safe custody. You shall continue to do so by me, who will act in the matter as your agent. I will become responsible to you for her security, and I will let you see her as often as you wish. Indeed I will engage to bring her down here to stop for a few days once or twice in the year, so that you may still regard her as being on the roll of your patients. By acceding to this proposition you would greatly oblige me!' Suppose, Olive, I said this to Dr. Hankinson, do you think he would accede to my wishes?"

"Yes; unless you have misread his character."

"And I should not have to talk about *bribes*?" added the doctor, with a smile.

It was drawing on to the latter part of the afternoon when Dr. Clarges and I drove through the park of Belle Vue. Dr. Hankinson was awaiting our arrival on the terrace, and assisted me from the carriage, with an expression of the pleasure it gave him to receive me as his guest. He was a handsome, well-bred man of the world, but he did not please me.

Dr. Clarges had arranged that he and I should dine alone with Dr. Hankinson, and that I should not see more of Mrs. Hankinson and her daughters than the ceremony of a formal introduction should necessitate. I had come to Belle Vue purely as a "business visitor," and the proprietor of the asylum was in the habit of displaying hospitality to "business visitors" of both sexes, without introducing them into Mrs. Hankinson's drawing-room. That lady and her family lived in a detached part of the house, and had their

own grounds and conservatories apart from those kept up for the delectation of the patients.

After dinner, as soon as the servants had left us, our conversation turned upon Etty Tree, when Dr. Hankinson, who either really was, or feigned to be, ignorant of my relationship to Lord Byfield, said, "Dr. Clarges has already told me, Miss Blake, that you are aware of the alarm this poor creature's hallucination caused Lady Byfield some three years or more since. But perhaps you are not aware of another remarkable feature of her insanity. She has a son, whose father was Major (afterward Sir George) Watchit. This child she secreted somewhere before she was captured and given over to me. Where he is no one that we can discover knows besides herself. Again and again, by arguments and artifices, I have endeavored to make her reveal where he is concealed, but my efforts have been ineffectual."

"I knew she had a child," I remarked, curtly.

"Her motive for concealment is the preposterous belief that Lord Byfield wants to obtain possession of the child, in order to remove him as an evidence of his intimacy with her."

"Poor thing!" I said, pityingly.

"Ay, you may well pity her. Away from her hallucinations, and its attendant delusion with regard to her child, she is the sweetest creature imaginable. She is quiet, tractable, eager to please, and singularly devoid of the petty artfulness which to their professional attendants is the most troublesome of the ordinary characteristics of the insane. I have long since allowed her unusual indulgences in the way of liberty. Attended by her nurse (a most intelligent and pleasant young woman) she may go wherever she pleases about the park; but on week days she hardly ever cares to go beyond the precinct of the little garden in which we have our ornamental water-works. She is very particular to attend the village church, which you may see in the corner of the park yonder, twice every Sunday; and when she is not observed she is very fond of reading the Bible, and committing whole chapters to memory. Before she came to us her favorite corner of our grounds used to be called 'the fountain garden,' but we have got into the habit of calling it now 'Lady Byfield's garden.'"

"Oh then you address her by the title to which she imagines she has a right?"

"No, we do not. But my patients often play upon each other's delusions. It is strange how they frequently appreciate the folly of their fellow-sufferers' hallucinations, and yet retain faith in their own. Consequently, knowing that poor Annette believes herself to have been married to a Mr. Petersham, who has since been created Lord Byfield, they speak of her in mockery among themselves as 'Lady Byfield.' Usually such raillery does no harm, for the afflicted person at whom it is pointed takes it as a genuine recognition of the truth of that which constitutes his delusion. But this is not the case with poor Annette. She knows her insane associates call her 'Lady Byfield' in mockery, and when she hears the title applied to her she blushes, and, though she says nothing, I can see that she is in acute pain."

"Oh, Dr. Hankinson," I said, rising, deeply wounded by this revelation, "take me to her instantly!"

"I will gladly do so," he answered. "She is most probably, this fine summer's evening, in her customary seat in the bower, watching the fountains. Will you accompany me?"

Leaving Dr. Clarges with the assurance that he would soon rejoin him for another glass of wine, Dr. Hankinson took me through the beautiful gardens of Belle Vue. Agreeable as it was to know that a favored few of my mentally afflicted fellow-creatures had such a home, it was still painful to reflect that the terraces and walks that lay before me were daily trod upon by mad people.

"Are you not afraid, doctor, of your patients escaping?" I said, as I surveyed the magnificent gardens, lying wide and open before my vision, with apparently nothing but noble lines of ever-green shrubs separating them from the park.

He smiled, and leading me behind one of the luxuriant walls of shrubbery, showed me that the laurels and firs concealed a ha-ha containing a high fence of strong timber that ran quite round the spacious grounds.

"Ah, doctor," I said, unable to respond to his triumphant smile, "there are other prisons in this fearful world, the barriers of which are hidden by an appearance of that which may contribute to happiness, but does not insure it!"

"My dear Miss Blake," answered my companion, "I am not a moralist, but only a mad doctor. But see, here we are in the 'fountain garden,' and there is Annette. Now I'll leave you. You can make yourself known to her. The only person in the garden besides herself is her nurse, who will keep at a respectful distance from you. You need fear no interruption from my patients; for every patient has a keeper, who follows him every where."

As he spoke he led me suddenly into a secluded nook of the garden, in the midst of which a fountain threw up four perpendicular jets of water, which rose to about thirty feet, and then curving gracefully, fell down into a basin of white marble bedded in green turf.

At the most distant corner of this nook I saw "the mad girl" sitting with her attendant in the summer-house. Oh, how altered she was! What cruel work had three years and three months of detention among insane companions, together with silent agony of heart, accomplished! Her delicate face had lost its roundness; and the deep sadness that knows not bitterness of language sat on the brow of her who once was Solomon Easy's merry little romp.

My step upon the gravel path fell on her ear while I was still thirty paces from her. Taking her eyes suddenly from the arches of sparkling water, she looked at me, rose as if struck by an electric shock, and advanced to meet me with long, quick steps. Twice she paused with a glance of terror, as if fearing herself the victim of a delusion; but the pauses were only instantaneous. Then on again she came with the quick, long strides, such as an Indian hunter tracking his prey might make, and in another five seconds she fell into my arms, and embracing me round the neck, exclaimed, "You've come at last, you've come at last to deliver me, to deliver me! Merciful God, I thank thee!"

Yes, the same merciful God who had brought me to repentance of my sin, and had hitherto guarded Tibby in her dark night of trouble, had

comforted Etty also with an assurance that "in His own good time He would, *by my instrumental-ity*, prove her innocent of that which I had laid to her charge."

Drawing her to the nearest garden bench, I placed her like a child by my side, kissing and caressing her, and covering her with endearments. I told her all the story of my life since I had seen her, how God had punished my pride and cruelty to her with the death of my darling babe, and had freed me from the bondage of *our* betrayer, by showing me the full extent of his hateful wickedness. I told her that I believed her story from the bottom of my heart, perfectly, and without reserve of any kind; and that by God's assistance I would clear away the clouds of dishonor that hung over her. I told her that I had been seeking her for many long weary months, and now that I had found her, she should be my friend till death parted us. I told her that I was acquainted with the history and noble occupation of her sister Tibby, who, in her stern tribulation, was laboring to lessen the sorrow of others.

The moon had risen and was watching us, when Dr. Hankinson found us arm in arm, walking like twin fond sisters in that fair garden of the mad. He said that we must part for the night, but promised that Etty should go home with me in the morning, for that Dr. Clarges had become responsible for her safety and wise treatment.

So we were constrained to part for the night.

"Good-night, Etty," I said, kissing her again. She took me a few paces apart, and whispered in my ear, "Good-night, Olive. Pray for me to-night. To-morrow night we will say our prayers together."

Having said this she went away meekly with her attendant.

For me, I obeyed her request; and afterward, when I laid my head on my pillow, and thought of the silent sorrow of her quiet face, and her patient submissiveness under her just but heavy punishment, I loved her even as I love her now—as though she were my sister.

And as I reposed that night in the home of the insane, I reflected on my awful sleepless nights of agony in Burstead House, when I used to cry aloud, "Oh, God, have mercy on me, and do not shatter my reason!"

CHAPTER V.

ETTY'S STORY.

DR. CLARGES (as was intimated in the last chapter) managed his negotiations so successfully with Dr. Hankinson, that the latter promised to allow Etty to return with me to Fulham on the next day. By the night of that next day I drove with the poor girl (rescued from the captivity of a lunatic asylum) through the plantation surrounding the grounds attached to my villa, and in another minute she was beneath my roof.

If ever woman sincerely repented the errors of a wayward and vain girlhood Etty Tree experienced such repentance. After she had been with me at Fulham for ten days, and I had studied her disposition more at leisure, I saw

that one of the duties incumbent upon me was to cheer her, and encourage her not to take too despondent a view of her past career. I found her literally steeped in self-abasement. To the agonizing shame with which she reflected on her heartless desertion of her engagement to Julian Gower was a terrifying belief that, in so breaking her troth, she had been guilty of the perjury most odious to her Maker as well as to man. She told me that, for herself, she had no wish in life but to consume her days in prayer and pious humiliation. If she could but accomplish one thing she would with contentment lead all the rest of her life in laborious obscurity, or forthwith die, imploring the Divine mercy to pardon her evil behavior.

The one thing she desired to accomplish was to prove the fact of her marriage with Arthur Petersham. She did not want to be recognized by society as his wife, or to receive a crumb of his prodigious wealth. But what she did want was to *prove* that the ceremony had been duly performed, so that when her boy grew to manhood he might know that his mother (however vain and frivolous and false she had been) had never been guilty of that for which there is no pardon on this side of the grave. "Dear Olive—dear, dear Olive," she said, "do not think me selfish in this wish, or imagine that for any less important object I would wish to render your position more painful than it is. But a mother's heart beats for her offspring before all other things. Generous, noble as you are, Olive, if your darling boy were on the floor there before us, singing lustily and talking nonsense to his toys, you would value your position as the *wife* of a wicked man differently from what you now esteem it at, and *even you* might find it beyond your power to aid in restoring to me my lost good fame (I do not say my *self-respect*—that you can never restore to me)." And my recollection of past trials told me how truly she spoke in saying this.

But what had become of her boy? It was one of the first questions I asked as she and I were travelling from Berkshire in the direction of town. "I do not know where he is," she answered, bursting into a flood of tears at the mention of her boy, "but we can find him."

"How?"

"Mr. Arthur Williams, of the Carlton Club House, knows. You understand what they mean by the Carlton Club House?"

"But how comes he to know about your boy?"

"He was the gentleman who took me from Lyons to London. He was very, *very* kind to me, and wanted to have me tell him all the particulars of my sorrow, but I would not. Oh, he was so very kind to me. And just as we were parting in London, he said to me: 'My dear lady, whatever your story may be, I am sure it is only one of wretchedness. Your sorrowful face tells me of your goodness.' 'No, no, Sir,' I said. 'I am not a good woman. I have done what all good people condemn; but I have not committed any wickedness wherefore the merciful should shun me.' Then he asked me, 'Can I, now that we are in London, render you any service? Speak frankly to me.' It was with a great effort that I said, 'Sir, great peril surrounds me; and yet what I do now, I must do secretly. There is a person in this mighty and

great city who wants to rob me of my child, and a terror is coming over me that my boy will be torn from me. It is a wicked man who wants to get possession of him.' 'Then,' said Mr. Williams, 'it would be a relief to you if I provided for the child's security for a few weeks, till you know what you ought to do for his future comfort.' I said, 'Indeed it would!' And he then took my little child and put him into his carriage, saying, 'My wife will take good care of this little fellow till you communicate with me. Here is my card.' And I took his card, on which was engraved, 'Mr. Arthur Williams, Carlton Club.' And so he took my child away, and I have never seen or heard of either of them since. After I left you on the day of my second visit to Grosvenor Square I was as one distracted. I walked about the streets, hour after hour, unable even to think what I should do. I can't say what I did in the streets, but I remember that people looked round at me with surprise. I went to St. Thomas's, Kennington. Of course I remembered nothing of the neighborhood; but when I entered the church I knew it was not the church in which I was married, for it in no way whatever resembled the church to which Mr. Petersham took me. Oh, dear Father in heaven, what a consternation fell upon me! I saw that Mr. Petersham had married me in some other church, and had falsely told me that the name of the church was St. Thomas's, Kennington. But I was determined to find out the right church. So day after day I walked about the streets searching for churches, and wherever I found a church I sought admittance to it, to see if by its interior I could recognize it as the church which I remembered so well. But I knew nothing of the ways about London, and the churches began to seem all so much like each other, and often I entered a church and discovered that I had already inspected it. One day a beadle said to me angrily, 'I don't believe, young woman, much as you look like a lady, that you ought to be walking about London alone. You've been to this church six times within three days, pestering me to let you look inside it. You either are after something wrong, or you ought to be shut up in a mad-house.' Oh, Olive, this frightened me almost into madness. He clearly thought me insane, and a fit inmate for such restraint as I had escaped from. But I still went on wandering over the streets of London looking out for churches.

"Every night I found myself lost in the maze of streets and squares, and then I used to get into a cab and be driven home to the lodging in Soho which I had hired. But at last my money was well-nigh gone that the kind lady gave me on parting with me at Lyons; yet still I continued my perambulations, faint, and weary, and weeping, and hungry, and fearful that in another hour I should go crazed. That was my sad plight when one day, as I was walking over a square (in what part of London I know not), images of all the faces I had ever seen came before me. My dear grandfather, and Tibby, and Major Watchit, and Mr. Petersham, and you, and Mr. Williams, and my little darling son, surrounded me—flitting to and fro before my eyes. Then I remembered the parable of the Prodigal Son, and how in his dire trouble and despair he said, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will

say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' And I caught myself thinking of Tibby, and that I would go back to her, humbled and contrite, and say to her, 'I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy sister.' And as I repeated these words to myself, hands were laid upon me; and struggling, and crying out for help which came not, I was captured, and forced into a carriage, and driven off to a house, where I saw Mr. Petersham and some other gentlemen."

"Yes!" I said, quickly; "you saw him?"

"Yes," she sobbed, as she continued her harrowing reminiscences, "he was there, and I called him my husband, and implored him to tell me the church in which we were married, as it was not St. Thomas's, Kennington. I told him I would no longer trouble him, nor claim position before the world as his wife, but that I wanted to be able to get the proofs of our marriage, so that my child might not be dishonored when he grew up to manhood. Then two of the gentlemen present, who I afterward found out were physicians, asked me where my child was, and I would not tell them. Then my husband lifted up his hands, and said aloud in my presence, 'Poor, poor Watchit! it will break his heart if he can not know where his son is.' Then I saw the full purpose and wickedness of the bad man. I knew I was in his power. So I closed my lips and would not answer a single question they put to me. And then— You know the rest. I was taken down to Berkshire."

There had not before existed in my mind any doubt that Lord Byfield had *himself* taken the measures which led to her incarceration at Belle Vue, though the order consigning her to custody was made out by his friend; but till Etty made this revelation to me, my chain of evidence was somewhat defective. Hitherto I had rested my confidence on the revelations *he* had led me to make to Sir Charles Norton, on the *glances* between *him* and Sir Charles, on the *fact* that *he* had once before consigned her to medical restraint, and on the *motive* which I believed *him* to have for again incarcerating her. But now I had her testimony, which of course I could easily corroborate by applying to Dr. Atkins or Dr. Teesdale, that Lord Byfield was personally present at the medical examination which led to her committal to Belle Vue. And yet Lord Byfield had assured me (at a time when he professed to place every trust and confidence in me) that he did not know where Etty Tree was. To what did that falsehood point? *It pointed to guilt!*

"And Etty," I said, "you are quite sure about the name of the gentleman who has charge of your child? You are confident it is 'Mr. Williams of the Carlton Club?'"

"Quite," she answered, making another revelation that greatly affected me; "you see I have made it a rule never to keep any thing about me that could lead to a discovery of that secret. So I destroyed his card; for though I was treated with much kindness at 'Belle Vue,' I had no drawer, or writing-case, or place of any kind that was not liable to be searched by Dr. Hankinson. So I destroyed Mr. Williams's card; but in order that I might keep his name and ad-

dress fresh in my mind, I every day wrote them out on a piece of paper, and then immediately I had so written them out, I used to tear the paper up in small pieces so that not a letter could be distinguished. Sometimes I was caught so tearing up my paper with a cautious air, and that simple act was set down as a sign of my insanity by Dr. Hankinson and his servants. You see, you see, Olive, I already talk of that fearful life from which I have just escaped as if it were altogether of the past."

After my return with Etty to Fulham, almost my first work was to institute inquiries about Mr. Arthur Williams of the Carlton Club. The task of discovering him was not a difficult one, for his name was on the list of the members of the Club, to the frequenters of which place he was known as a gentleman of ancient family and large estates in Wales. Luckily he was still in London, not having yet left town for his country seat. Mr. Castleton called upon him at the Carlton Club, and was received by him with appropriate politeness and caution.

"It is quite true," said Mr. Williams, after being informed by Mr. Castleton of the purpose of his call, "that I have under my charge a child—a little boy—confided to me under very peculiar circumstances; but when I took charge of the child I promised his mother that I would surrender him to no one but her. I made this promise at a time when I was quite ignorant of her name and history—as indeed I still am. Such being the state of the case, I can not tell you the abode of the child till I am requested by her personally to do so. Perhaps you would not object to tell me the lady's address, so that I may call upon her."

"He's a handsome, gentlemanly fellow," observed Mr. Castleton to me approvingly, when he reported to me the above speech, "and I respect him for his caution."

Having had thus far such good reason to be satisfied with what I heard of his position and character, I wrote to Mr. Williams, inviting him to call upon me at Fulham Villa, where he would see the lady to whom he had rendered an important service. The result of this missive was, that Mr. Williams saw Etty in my house, and told her of the school for little children in Brighton, where her boy was thriving admirably, and having achieved a reputation for being the cleverest little fellow, as well as the most beautiful little fellow, that his governesses had ever taught.

"Sir," said Etty, "I wish I could show my gratitude to you by putting before you all the secrets of my unhappy life. But at present I must still be unknown to you. I trust, however, the day will come when my son will be able to thank you fitly for your goodness to his mother."

As soon as Mr. Williams had taken his departure I kissed her, and said, "Now, my darling, get ready for a journey down to Brighton. We'll be posting to the Sussex cliffs this very night."

But instead of cordially concurring in this proposition she looked up at me pitiously, and shaking her head said, "No, no!"

"Why, Etty, what do you mean?"

"That I will not see him," she said, quietly, "till I can tell him without shame who his father is."

"But dear one," I answered, "it may be years and years ere we discover the proofs of your marriage."

"Possibly," she replied, dropping her head, "we shall never find them. And in that case—I will—*never*—see him."

"Do not say that, Etty."

"Olive," she said, turning up her gentle face, while the tears rolled down it fast, "I will try to win Heaven's mercy for my sins by making myself what our Lord tells us we ought to be. Help me in my resolution to be unselfish like Tibby. Don't let me ever again shape my course by the rule of my own feelings. Were I guided by them now I should hasten with you to Brighton, but my little boy is now old enough to ask his mother if he has a father. And soon he will be so old that, when he discovers his mother dares not answer this question *fully* and *truly*, he will feel the shame, and the bitterness, and the degradation of dishonored birth. I should give myself pleasure by discharging all the duties of a mother to him, but I should cause him ever-increasing anguish. No, Olive, since your bounty is going to provide for his education, let him be brought up as an orphan, and let Mr. Castleton be his guardian. Let him be called 'Arthur Williams' still, until we can show him that he has a right to the name of 'Arthur Petersham.' Don't oppose me in this, Olive. It is not an idle fancy, but a duty. It is part of my just punishment. What I have hitherto endured I could not avoid. Let me not unworthily shrink from the rest of my punishment, which my conscience tells me I ought to submit to voluntarily."

And when she had said this, I saw by the fervor of her tearful eyes and by her folded hands that she was secretly addressing herself to the Master whom she served. So I was silent.

Mothers can only know the awful extent of the self-sacrifice which chastened, penitent, gentle Etty resolved to make. It was a sacrifice of the sweetest joys of human affection—a sacrifice renewed each day for years and years. And she made it in love for her son, so that he might never know the anguish of looking on a shamed mother. Shall she not win Heaven's mercy—*quia multum amavit*?

So little Arthur was still called Arthur Williams, and was educated as an orphan child—first at Brighton, and afterward at Dr. Renter's school on Blackheath; Mr. Castleton discharging toward him all the offices of a cold and reserved guardian.

CHAPTER VI.

THE USE OF THE TATTLING.

ALTHOUGH Etty knew of her sister's abode and residence in Marchioness Street, she did not express a desire to visit her; and I, instead of suggesting such a step, waited for a spontaneous manifestation of her wishes. It was not till she had been an inmate of Fulham Villa for some weeks that she gave me any intimation of her feelings on the subject; and then I learned that considerations akin to those which kept her away from her child made her shrink from the thought of asking for Tibby's embrace while a cloud of uncertainty hung over her fame.

"Let me wait, Olive," she said, "for a little while. Perhaps even this year may bring a successful conclusion to your labors."

The topic having been once entered upon she returned to it frequently. She told me the history of Tibby's childhood—her close companionship with Julian Gower—her strong affection (even to *love*) for him—Julian's ignorance as to the state of her feelings for him—her deep gloom of disappointment bravely struggled against, and her inability to conceal on one solitary occasion from a sister's eye the secret of her heart. Indeed, she told me nearly every thing concerning the early relations of Julian and her sister which the reader of this volume is familiar with. "Oh, Olive," she said to me, "when I took my wicked departure from Laughton I sustained myself with a hope that when I became the acknowledged wife of Mr. Petersham, Julian, in his generosity—which is beyond that of all other generous men—might so far pardon me as not to consider my baseness as a reason why he should not love Tibby, who had in silence and in sorrow loved him for so long. That hope was one of the fair visions by which Satan tempted me from the path of duty, at moments when the allurements of promised wealth and grandeur had less influence on my foolish mind."

"Etty," I said, "why should not your hope still be fulfilled?"

"Do not mock me, Olive," she answered, so pitifully that I held back the thought which was wandering from my lips.

But that thought returned to me again and again; and after an interval of months I took a fit opportunity to clothe it in words and put it before her.

"Etty, I will not mock you, but will speak most gravely to you," I said to her one fine morning in the first spring of her eight years' residence at Fulham. "Let me cherish a romantic dream and communicate it to you; for there is a charm about my life that makes my romantic dreams come true. I believe that Tibby may even yet become the wife of Julian Gower. He is rich, honored, and surrounded by friends. Yet he does not marry. How is this? It is more than seven years since he met with a disappointment in your affections—a period of time long enough for such a man to outlive such a sorrow in. He is not embittered—that I know; for I have received especial tidings of him, his character, and his proceedings, several times within the last twelve months. Surely such a man as he is must yearn for the delights of home—the affection and adoration of wife and children. You, in your farewell letter to him, told him that our good, heroic, self-sacrificing Tibby had always loved him ardently. Such a communication, made to such a man, was seed that *must* bear fruit. Do you not think that the explanation of his not having ere this married is that he waits, hoping one day to find out Tibby and force her to be his wife? Etty, let me take some means to inform him where Tibby is, and there will be good hope for the fulfilment of your dream and mine."

She shuddered as she said, "That could *never* be, so long as there was any uncertainty surrounding my career. If I were dead, what we hope might come to pass—that is to say, if they knew that I were dead."

She had of her own accord gone to the very point which had embarrassed me in my schemings, but which I could not myself have directed her attention to.

We were silent for several minutes—she lying on a sofa in deep, brown study, and I, that my presence might not disturb her meditations, continuing to embroider a piece of muslin.

"Olive," she said at last, rising from the sofa and coming close up to me, and looking with her earnest violet eyes into the secrets of my heart, "I know your thought. It is a right one and a glorious one. Cause Julian and Tibby to believe that I am dead. You can manage it, for you have Mr. Castleton and Dr. Clarges, and their strange, mysterious agents to carry out your wishes. Let them think that I am dead. They will mourn for me, and bury me tenderly in their sweetest imaginations; and after the lapse of one or two years they will look out on life as though I were not. Do this. Dear, darling Olive, do this!"

She was earnest in her entreaty at the time; and so earnest was she after the excitement of the first consideration of the scheme, that she again and again, in the course of the next fortnight, reverted to our vaguely-conceived plan, and urged me to act promptly.

The next thing I did was to speak to Mr. Castleton, who, after some ten days of consideration, told me that I must leave all the details of a certain project he had framed to him, and must do exactly what he bade me. He directed me to take an occasion to accost Tibby Tree, without letting her imagine who I was, and tell her a story of a wicked girl's life in such a manner that Tibby should believe she was listening to the narrative of her own sister's shame. He told me the tale that I was to repeat to the hospital matron; and when he had given me exact instructions how I was to conduct myself on the occasion of addressing her, he too prepared to take his leave of me, saying, "And now I must devise a plan for your meeting her."

"You must remember, Mr. Castleton," I said, "I have never yet even seen her, and am altogether ignorant of her personal appearance, save from your description and Etty's."

"True," he answered, "you must acquaint yourself with her personal appearance. Go next Sunday evening to Marchioness Street, and walk up and down the street till you see a little pale woman sitting in the bow-window of 'Grace Temple.' Miss Tree is in the habit of sitting every Sunday evening in that window. You will not miss her."

Acting on Mr. Castleton's orders, I drove into London on the following Sunday evening, and leaving my carriage at the corner of Gordon Square to wait till my return, I went to Marchioness Street; and the very first time I walked down the street and looked up at the hospital, I saw, sitting at the open bow-window, a lady, whom I recognized immediately as Tibby Tree, from the verbal descriptions I had had of her personal aspect. She was very pale, and looked in wretchedly ill health. I passed before the hospital more than once; and each time I passed I scanned her face—so that I was sure I should know it again any where. And ere I returned to Fulham that night, I drove to Mr. Castleton's private house, and told him that my

expedition to Marchioness Street had proved successful.

A few mornings afterward Mr. Castleton made his appearance at my breakfast-table at Fulham, and said, "Miss Blake, I have business for you to attend to to-day. Miss Tree will in all probability be found walking in Hyde Park somewhere near Apsley House this very afternoon. You must meet her there."

"How do you know she will be there?" I asked.

"Mr. Rover, the house-surgeon of the Sick Children's Hospital, who is a young friend and a family connection of mine, has induced her to promise that she will walk in Hyde Park for a little change," answered Mr. Castleton, significantly.

"But are you sure that she will be near Apsley House?"

Mr. Castleton smiled good-naturedly as he answered, "She told Mr. Rover that if she went to the Park she should go straight to the Duke of Wellington's house and admire it. Now, no more questions, my inquisitive client. The compact between us in this matter is, that I am to order, and you are to obey."

And I did obey him implicitly. I went into Hyde Park; and, after walking about for a couple of hours, I encountered the person I sought; and I told her that story which Mr. Castleton had put into my lips; and she thought that Etty was a wicked girl, sinking down lower and lower in the abysses of crime. So moved was she by my words that she fainted in my arms; and I conveyed her home to Marchioness Street in my carriage, and ere she had fully returned to consciousness I left her with the nurses of the hospital and departed—at the same time glad and sorrowful that I had accomplished my task so effectually.

About three months after that event Mr. Castleton called on me and said, "Can you get me a piece of lace, or fancy-work of any kind, made by Miss Tabitha Tree? Mrs. Gurley told me that Miss Tree used to be very clever in the production of tatting-embroidery, and that she made some of a very peculiar kind, called 'Cluster-tatting,' and gave it to her sister. Ask Miss Annette if she has any of that lace. If she has any she must give it to me."

It so happened that Etty had some of the very same "Cluster-tatting" about which Mr. Castleton inquired. It was invented as well as worked by her sister, and Etty had it on a garment which she rarely wore. At my request, therefore, she picked it off the article of dress, and I gave it to Mr. Castleton.

"What do you want it for?" I asked of him.

"Miss Blake," he answered, passionately, stuffing the beautiful lace into his pocket, "I would rather cut off my right hand than tell you at present."

Such excitement was so unusual with him that it both surprised and frightened me.

It was not till after the expiration of years that I learned what a terrible use Mr. Castleton had made of that tatting.

In the following January, after the event just narrated, Mr. Castleton said to me, "Miss Tabitha Tree not only believes that her sister and her sister's child are dead, but she has erected a memorial to her in Highgate Cemetery. You

had better not tell your friend Miss Annette this."

"Surely I will not," I said, trembling.

"How have you succeeded in effecting this, Mr. Castleton?" I then inquired.

And he again answered me passionately, "I will not tell you. I would rather cut off my right hand than tell you at present."

So I asked him no more questions.

"But," he added, when he had composed himself, "here is an engraving of the memorial erected by Miss Tree, which you may look at."

As he spoke he took from his pocket a little hand-bill book containing sketches of monuments and mural devices, with the prices of them underneath; and No. 1 of the series of engravings was one of Etty's memorial stone, thus inscribed:

In Memory of
ETTY TREE,
and of
All who loved her and are no more,
This Stone
is erected by
TIBBY TREE.

"This is a prospectus of a mural sculptor," said I, referring to the hand-bill book.

"Exactly," said Mr. Castleton; "the mural sculptor who erected the memorial had, at my suggestion, prepared a few of these books, and I mean to-night to post one of them to Mr. Gower. The sketch of memorial No. 1 will meet his eye directly he opens the letter."

"A capital way to inform him of the fact."

"He will imagine that it comes to him sent by the sculptor as an advertisement in the ordinary way of business. I know something of Mr. Gower's character; and if I am not mistaken in him, he will, on seeing the sketch, pay a visit to Highgate, and, as he lives in that neighborhood, will frequently repeat his visit. Miss Tabitha Tree will also frequently go there; and possibly, if we let them alone, they may one day encounter each other in the burial-ground."

In due course Mr. Castleton's prediction was verified; for by the October next to the one succeeding the date when this intelligence was communicated to me Tibby and Julian met close to the memorial stone, and from that time they renewed their old intimacy with each other.

That Julian Gower was in the habit of calling on Tibby in the Marchioness Street Hospital Mr. Castleton duly informed me and Etty. All their movements were known to us, for my vigilant lawyer kept close watch on them through his agents; and when, after the expiration of two years from the meeting of the two old friends and playmates in the Highgate burial-ground, Mr. Gower bought "The Cedars," and prepared to leave his bachelor residence at Hampstead, we knew that a wedding was approaching.

And when Tibby and Julian were at last married, I and Etty, concealed behind a screen, were among the rejoicing multitude that thronged the church; and we knelt down together, and repeated after the clergyman the beautiful collect of the Church Service: "O merciful Lord and Heavenly Father, by whose gracious gift mankind is increased; We beseech thee, assist with thy blessing these two persons, that they may be fruitful in procreation of children, and also live

together so long in godly love and honesty, that they may see their children christianly and virtuously brought up to thy praise and honor, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

At the close of that day, which we spent in gladness at Fulham Villa, Mr. Castleton communicated to me, and Dr. Clarges, and Etty the awful use that he had made of the "cluster-tatting."

CHAPTER VII.

FULHAM, MONACO, AND ELSEWHERE.

FROM the date of Etty's liberation from "Belle Vue" till I was able to restore her with an untarnished reputation to her sister eight years and a few weeks intervened; during all which period she resided at Fulham Villa—never going beyond the boundary of my pleasure-grounds save when she went into the village on missions of charity (which were frequent), or attended Divine service in the parish church (where she was a regular worshiper), or when on one or two very rare occasions (such, for instance, as Tibby's marriage) she had an especial reason for quitting her retreat for a short time. We left Berkshire with an understanding that Etty should visit "Belle Vue" once a year, and remain for a few nights within the walls of the Asylum, so that Dr. Hankinson might be able with an easy conscience to regard her as still upon the list of his patients. But Dr. Clarges made certain fresh representations to the proprietor of "Belle Vue," which induced him voluntarily to relieve Etty from the vexatious obligation to pay the Asylum periodic visits. She was, therefore, a continual inmate of my house, and a very gentle, quiet, loving, grateful inmate we all found her. Aunt Wilby (as her health broke up before the slow advances of old age) found in her an assiduous and devoted nurse. My father's faithful old servants became strongly attached to her; and I (as I have already said) loved her as a sister. I loved her as I had never before loved any woman!

We called her by her maiden name—the servants speaking of her as Miss Tree, Dr. Clarges and Aunt Wilby addressing her as Annette, and I employing for ordinary use in my close intercourse with her the endearing diminutive of "Etty," by which she was known in her girlhood.

Hers was a sad life at Fulham; and I knew it was so, though she made it one of her first duties to conceal her sadness from me, and to appear both cheerful to her companions and contented in her retirement. Never did exclamation of fretful repining or impatience escape her lips. Week after week, when, on summing up the results of the previous six days' labor, I had to say, "Not one step further made!" she only bowed her head submissively, and gave me some affecting proofs of her gratitude or resignation. "Never mind—God will do it in his own good time!" "Oh, Olive, may the peace that passeth all understanding be your reward!" Such speeches as these she would utter in a soft, silver voice; and then she would put her delicate arm over my shoulders and kiss me.

Her only amusement was to play solemn sacred music upon the organ, which formed a part

of the furniture of my library. She took such deep and manifest pleasure in music that I endeavored to prevail upon her to accompany me to the public performances of "oratorios" during the season. But my proposal that she should indulge herself with even this grave diversion caused her so much agitation and pain that I did not ever renew it. "No, no, Olive," she said, "I do not wish to go into the world; your organ gives my thoughts all the melody they require. In your lovely garden I have all the recreation I wish for. I do not wish ever to go beyond the boundaries of Fulham till it shall please God to take away my shame." And so Etty lived with me for eight long years and something more, leading as quiet, and secluded, and penitential a life as ever any religious lady lived in the calm, still ages that have left us only the tradition of their beauty.

But what steps was I taking to obtain proofs of Etty's marriage? My first proceeding (as the reader doubtless supposes) was to do that systematically which Etty, scared, terrified, and almost crazed, attempted to accomplish by her own unaided weakness years before. I had all the marriage registers of London systematically examined. This was a work that consumed time, labor, and money; but it was accomplished. There was not a single marriage register in London from which I failed to obtain accurate copies of all the records of marriages entered in it during the month in which Etty stated she was married; but the labor was all in vain. The record of a marriage between Arthur Petersham and Annette Tree could not be found. How was this to be accounted for? My trusty and most reliable agents (procured for me by Mr. Castleton) were ordered to report minutely, in writing, the exact state of the registers from which the copies of registrations were made; and I had not had one intimation that a register had been found showing any signs of mutilation, or obliteration, or alteration of any kind. The explanation, therefore, could not be that one of the London registers had been tampered with. Again, it could not be that Etty was mistaken as to the month in which she was married, for all her statements coincided with the information obtained by Mr. Castleton in the "corn country." Between her flight from Loughton and her marriage only one entire night had elapsed. Of this she was sure. Mr. Castleton had learned from Mr. Gurley the exact date of her flight, and it was the same as that given by herself. It was an unreasonable excess of caution, and an extravagant determination to do my work thoroughly, that made me order my agents to copy out the entries of all the marriages registered in the entire month of October, 18—.

"Mr. Castleton," I said, brought to a standstill, "what does this mean?"

"It means," he answered, "that any how the young person was not married in London."

The tone in which he said this made me respond sharply, "Surely, Mr. Castleton, after all that we *have* discovered, you don't doubt that Etty was married?"

"She *may* have been married," the lawyer answered, sententiously. "Your first question referred to the state of the London registers, and my answer to that question was, 'the young person was not married in London.'"

"Surely she was not married in another city, and led by misrepresentation to believe that it was London."

"Such *may* have been the case," said Mr. Castleton, dryly, after a minute's consideration. "Any how, the suggestion is ingenious. When Sir George Watchit took her from Loughton she had literally never seen a larger town than that petty rotten borough. She was put into a carriage and conveyed away post-haste in the hours of darkness. To avoid observation, as soon as the sun rose and it became light the blinds of the carriage were drawn down, so that she could see nothing of the country through which she passed. By her own account it was quite a dark evening, with the lamps all alight, when she entered London. A young country girl, so conveyed to a provincial city, and assured that she was passing through the streets of an obscure quarter of London, would of course believe the statement. Then every circumstance of her experiences of the night *before*, and on the morning of her marriage, favors the hypothesis you have just put forth. The necessity of avoiding publicity (I am using her own statement) was urged upon her by Sir George Watchit as a reason why she should retire to rest immediately on arriving at the hotel, and decline the assistance of the chamber-maid of the hotel in making her toilet for the night. The next morning, when she rose and came into the private sitting-room for breakfast, she was surprised at finding the blinds of the room drawn down; whereupon Sir George Watchit explained to her that the windows looked upon a street, that curious eyes were continually fixed upon hotel windows, and that therefore, *to avoid publicity*, he had pulled down the blinds. After breakfast she was put into a close carriage, was conveyed to a church hard by, was married to her husband by an aged clergyman, was taken back to the carriage, and, without being allowed to return to the hotel where she slept, was carried straight off to the sea-side, where she was taken on board Mr. Petersham's yacht and conveyed abroad. On her journey from the church to the sea-coast the same excessive precaution was taken (for instance, that of keeping the carriage-blinds down) to avoid publicity, *or to prevent the young person so abstracted from taking any notes of the road which she was traveling.*"

"Surely," I said, enthusiastically, "that is how it *must* have been!"

"No, no," answered Mr. Castleton, coolly, smiling as he spoke. "Don't be so emphatic. I see no *must* in the matter, but only a little *may*. That's all. I say that your hypothesis is very ingenious, but it stands sorely in need of proof. Back it up with evidence, and I will say you are a very clever woman, and ought to be called to the bar."

When Mr. Castleton left me I went to Etty and told her my new hypothesis, and asked her if she could recall any circumstance that would show it to be untenable.

She was silent for several minutes, thinking over all the case I put before her. At last she raised her face from her two hands, in which she had laid it to rest, and with that singular expression in her violet eyes which always showed when she was greatly moved, she said to me, "Oh, Olive! you have taken a weight off my

heart! For weeks past, and months, as report after report came in, showing that the record of my marriage could not be found in the London registers, I have been afflicted with a terrible imagination."

"What was it?"

"That Mr. Petersham had given me only a mock marriage, such as novels tell about; that he had taken me to a building which was only made to appear like a church, where the clergyman was only an impostor dressed up to act a part, and where the register was only a fictitious imitation of a register."

"My dearest girl," I answered, laughing, "what a childish notion! That is just the kind of villainy Lord Byfield, rich and powerful as he is, could not have perpetrated toward you. He could not have built his sham church without attracting attention; and in all his arrangements secrecy has been his one grand object. Wealth, enormous wealth, Etty, can buy almost any thing more readily than it can buy privacy. But what do you say to my hypothesis?"

"Why, that it is the true one," Etty answered, kissing me and (a thing she very rarely did) weeping plentifully.

I determined to lose no time in proving it a correct one.

I forthwith caused my agents to do for the provincial cities what they had already done in London. One after another I visited all the large towns of England that could have been reached by Etty and Major Watchit, as they posted from "the corn country," in the time that Etty well remembered they were upon the road. The time so consumed was just about the time which it took to post full speed from London to the corn country; and Etty and Major Watchit had traveled the entire distance of their journey without stopping to rest on the road. If, therefore, the fraud I suspected had been really practiced upon Etty, the conspirators had been prudent enough to make the time of the journey actually taken correspond with the time consumed by the journey that would have been taken supposing they had veritably made London the scene of the marriage.

At first, therefore, I sent my agents to the large towns that lay about as far from "the corn country" as London did. But such towns were searched unavailingly. I, of course, dared not advertise in the papers for the certificate I required, offering a reward to the parish clerk who should send me a copy of it, for such a step would have attracted the attention of Lord Byfield. So I was compelled to work slowly and at great expense, by paid copyists who were ordered to get copies of *all* the registrations, and were ignorant of the *particular registration* which it was my object to discover.

When my agents had visited the great towns already indicated in vain, they were sent to smaller ones; for I reflected that even an humble country town might be made to appear a very great place to an unsophisticated country child like Etty, who had never seen a larger town than Loughton. Bent upon deluding her as to the magnitude of the place to which she was taken in a close carriage, Major Watchit might have caused the post-boys to take the carriage up and down the same streets dozens of times,

and so have caused his victim to deem herself in London when she was only in a rural borough.

But my agents were not more successful in the smaller towns than they were in the larger. Every post they sent me dozens and dozens of copies of certificates, but not one of them related to the marriage of Arthur Petersham and Annette Tree. Then a thought struck me. "Why," I said, "need the town in which the marriage took place be so far from the corn country as London? Just as Major Watchit might have confused Etty as to the size of the town in which she was married, so he might have deluded her as to the nature and distance of the route taken. He might have traveled over the same country roads and lanes dozens of times, just as he might dozens of times have had his carriage rattled up and down the same streets. Thus while Etty believed herself posting from Loughton to London, she might only have been taken by devious roads backward and forward in her native province and the one adjoining it." On this striking me, I caused my agents to send me copies of all the marriage registrations of the specified dates in every city and town that could have been reached in *fifteen hours or any less period*, by people traveling in a carriage, drawn at the extreme speed of posting-horses.

Five years I carried on this costly and harassing inquiry, and at the end of them I seemed no nearer attaining to my object than when I commenced my labors.

"Come, Miss Blake," at length Mr. Castleton said to me, "you must in common prudence desist from this vain hunt. The mystery is beyond us to discover; and you are ruining yourself in health and fortune by the excitement and the enormous expenses of a mad investigation. Do take my advice. You have shown romantic generosity to your friend in doing what you have done, and she must be satisfied that you have so acted. Indeed, you must pause. Already the cost of paying your agents, and paying the requisite fees for the privilege of searching the registers, has seriously embarrassed your income. You are in my debt now for several thousands, and ere you succeed in achieving your hope, or satisfying yourself that it is beyond achievement, you will incur liabilities which you will be unable to liquidate even by bequeathing to your creditors the whole of the fortune in the hands of your trustees, and which you are empowered to dispose of by your last testament. So do now rest quiet. Pardon the warmth and decision with which I presume to give you this advice. You know I have only your interest at heart in giving it."

"Mr. Castleton," I said, warmly, "I will not desist till I have spent every sixpence I can borrow for prosecuting my inquiries."

"Why, what can you do?"

"I shall go to Monaco and see if I can not discover any clew to this mystery there."

"My dear Miss Blake, what can you discover there beyond what you already know—that Mr. Petersham, and Major Watchit, and Miss Annette lived together for some time in a cottage in Castellare?"

"It is no use for you to discourage me, for I am bent upon making the trip."

"You mean it?"

"Yes, and if I can not get you to accompany me I will go alone."

"Nay," he said, "if you will in spite of my representations persevere I will accompany you."

After the lapse of a few months, and just a week subsequent to the wedding-day of Tibby and Julian, Mr. Castleton and I set out for Monaco, he fortunately having a partner ready and able to look after his professional affairs.

We thought at one time of taking Etty with us; but as we knew the excursion would cause her great pain, we determined to leave her at Fulham, and send for her to join us, traveling under a suitable escort, if any thing should transpire at Castellare which should make us wish for her presence there.

I need not trouble my readers with all the particulars of my journey to Italy. I will be brief. We spent only three nights at Mentone, and made two separate excursions to Castellare. The only person we saw at Castellare was the priest of the village, who, in answer to our question whether he remembered an English gentleman of the name of Petersham living in the village, in a particular residence which we knew well how to designate, shook his head, and said gravely, "I remember such a person; he was a frequent guest of a gentleman named Watchit, who held the residence you mention for twenty years."

"For twenty years?" Mr. Castleton and I exclaimed with surprise.

"Ay, for twenty years. He was a rich man, an English nobleman, who used to come from England to Mentone every year in his yacht. His visits here were mysterious, and in one respect painful."

"How so?"

"There was always a lady in the casino; but not the same one throughout the twenty years. From this circumstance I am compelled to put a painful construction on that gentleman's life."

It was impossible, I said to myself at first. Major Watchit was in India during the greater part of the twenty years! He could not have been in the habit of paying an annual visit to Monaco! Then, in another minute, the explanation of the mystery flashed upon me.

"Can you describe Mr. Watchit to us?" asked Mr. Castleton.

"Surely, Sir," said the priest, bowing; "he was of the middle height, of a fair complexion, light eyes, and light hair, worn long."

"Ay, exactly," said Mr. Castleton, not a single muscle of his countenance betraying the value he set upon the worthy priest's words. "And Mr. Petersham was—"

"Singulantly tall, and thin, and dark, and sunburned."

"How often do you say Mr. Petersham was a visitor here?"

"During the last two years and a half or three years of Mr. Watchit's tenure of the residence, he was here much. Indeed for as long as six months together he was here constantly. It is now more than nine years since Mr. Watchit relinquished the residence, and with suddenness and some mystery left the village, taking with him the poor young girl who had last lived in the residence for about three years."

"Why do you call her poor?" I asked.

"Ay, lady," he answered, "and is not sin the worst kind of poverty?"

"Let us think the best for her."

"I do, lady. I trust that she has repented. My villagers are very simple; but simplicity and ignorance could not prevent them from knowing the nature of Mr. Watchit's life. And she, poor girl, looked rather an angel of grace than a child of iniquity. She was very unhappy before she left, and twice I obtained means to have some religious conversation with her, and she seemed much moved by my address; but, alas! she displayed the worst sign of such guilt as hers."

"What was that?"

"An obdurate determination to deny her guilt. She said she was married."

"And you did not believe her?"

"Nay, lady, I could not. I had seen too many of her predecessors at the residence," he answered, meekly, and not uncharitably.

"Do you think that you would recognize Mr. Watchit if you saw him?"

"Ay, surely," the priest answered, raising his face with animation, and striking his breast with his right hand, "the man was too much the enemy of my flock for me not to remember him well."

"If at any time," asked Mr. Castleton, "we should require you, in the cause of virtue and religion, to come to England to identify that man, and testify that he lived here under the name of Watchit, could you come?"

"I would ask my superiors, and I doubt not, Sir, permission would be accorded to me."

We had much further conversation with the priest; but he told us nothing more of any importance with which the readers of the preceding books are not already familiar.

"Miss Blake," said Mr. Castleton to me, as we returned to Mentone, "you have rightly read the secret of Lord Byfield's life. In his youth he contracted a habit of dark and hidden sin—sin conceived and carried out in tortuous and secret paths. His school-friend Watchit was, from the opening to the close of his life, an accomplice in his crimes, allowing him, his powerful patron, to use his name, as a curtain behind which he might with impunity perpetrate his atrocities—as a blind to obviate any public scandal depriving him of his right to your fortune."

"Do you still advise me to relinquish my investigations?" I asked, with something of triumph in my voice.

"No," he answered, hotly. "And rather than have you desist for want of funds, I'd gladly give you £10,000 of my own property, although I am only a professional man, and have a family."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOMEWHAT LEGAL.

"THE marriage," said I to Mr. Castleton, shortly after our return from the Continent, "must have been performed in a church in which such a ceremony could be legally performed. Etty so distinctly remembers the interior of the building—the position of the galleries, the fashion of the pews, the attire of the officiating clergyman. The font, she says, stood in the middle of the principal aisle—a fact that was

impressed upon her by its station rendering it necessary for her to take a circuit round it, before she could reach the part of the church where the wedding rites were solemnized. The draperies of the communion-table were of blue cloth, edged with gold cord. The clergyman wore an M.A. hood, similar to her grandfather's. Now of all the suppositions which can be made about this mysterious case, the most incredible is that which her own fears once suggested—namely, that Lord Byfield took her to an unconsecrated building, fitted up in imitation of a church, and duped her with a mock marriage. Such a hypothesis can not be received for a moment. Where could Lord Byfield find such a building, with the requisite agents to serve him in broad daylight? Surely in no town in England. There must be a record of the marriage in some legal register; and if we could find it we should have gained our game."

"It is possible," said the lawyer, "that the marriage was legally solemnized, but the entry of the record was falsely made: the wrong names, for instance, might have been inserted in the register."

"But," I said, "Etty signed her own name Annette Tree; and she remembers distinctly seeing the name of Arthur Petersham immediately above the space in which she signed her name."

"Ay," said Mr. Castleton, holding up his hand, and smiling, "she told us so yesterday, when we talked the whole matter over with her. But perhaps you did not notice the question I put to her—whether after she signed the register she looked at it again. I put that inquiry to her, and she answered 'No.'"

"Well?"

"It was possible for Major Watchit, or another person, to have falsified the record after Miss Annette Tree laid down the pen. Attend to me. There were in all present at the ceremony six persons—the clergyman, Arthur Petersham, Annette Tree, Major Watchit, a lady named Mrs. Spencer, brought to the church by Mr. Petersham to act as a witness, and the clerk. The two witnesses were Major Watchit and Mrs. Spencer. Major Watchit, we know, was an accomplice of the bridegroom's. Mrs. Spencer did not meet Miss Tree at the hotel, but joined the wedding party at the church, Mr. Petersham having requested her attendance for the purpose of witnessing the ceremony and signing the register. It is fair to suppose that this woman was also an accomplice. Mr. Petersham did not (we are informed) introduce her by name to Miss Tree in the church, but only called her 'an old friend of his mother's.' Indeed, Miss Annette did not learn the lady's name till she was on her road to the sea-side, when, on asking Major Watchit who the lady was, he answered, 'Mrs. Spencer.' Now who this woman was we do not know. Miss Tree represents her as aged and decrepit. Even her old age becomes to me matter of suspicion; for whether she was a conscious accomplice in the crime (which we believe to have been perpetrated), or whether she was a mere imbecile tool, ignorant of Mr. Petersham's purpose, it quite accords with Mr. Petersham's systematic caution that he should select an *old* person for his coadjutor—a person who, in the ordinary course of nature, would soon be dead,

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and unable to testify against him at any distant period. Certainly she was not his mother's 'intimate friend,' for if she had been you would have heard of her."

"Go on. I will regard her as an accomplice."

"And I, by way of variety, will regard her as a dupe—a mere unconscious tool. For whichever she was it does not affect the main issue."

"Go on."

"Let us suppose the ceremony over, and the party round the register in the vestry. Mr. Arthur Petersham signs his name—good! Miss Annette Tree signs her name—well again! Mrs. Spencer signs her name—so far all is well! Now Major Watchit takes the pen to write his name as a witness. As the Major does so Mr. Petersham gives the clerk a handsome fee and tells him to hurry out of the vestry and see if his carriage is all ready. The clerk of course obeys, and removes himself from the scene. That done, Mr. Petersham adroitly (as he can do things) engages the attention of the sleepy old rector in a conversation with himself, his pretty bride, and Mrs. Spencer, who has already signed her name. Major Watchit is relieved from the observation of surrounding eyes. What is to prevent him from not merely putting in a signature for himself, but also altering the names already inserted? He might do this, supposing Mrs. Spencer were not an accomplice; he would do it with greater ease if she were an accomplice. Let us carry the scene one step further. The clerk comes back and announces that the carriage is all ready. The rector turns round, in a flutter of habitual sleepiness broken in upon by the excitement of an unusual event, and says, 'Oh, dear me! you would like a copy of the certificate?' To this Mr. Petersham answers, 'It is of no consequence; but still I will have it. Here, Watchit, I'll lead Etty to the carriage, and we'll wait till you bring us the copy—she is faint and wants to recline.' This arrangement is acceded to. Mr. Petersham puts Etty into the carriage. They wait till Major Watchit comes to them with the copy, with all its misdescriptions, and puts it into Mr. Petersham's hand. In another minute Major Watchit takes his place by the side of Etty, and the two post off to the sea. Mr. Petersham then enters his carriage, which has drawn up by the side of the door, and with Mrs. Spencer by his side drives away. It may also be presumed that on reaching his wife at Monaco he does not show the attested copy of the certificate, containing misdescriptions which would rouse her suspicions."

"What an astounding hypothesis!" said I, genuinely admiring my lawyer's ingenuity. "But the misdescriptions of the register would have to accord with the names in the license, which of course was left in the hands of the officiating clergyman?"

"Certainly. I assume that the license has been obtained with misrepresentations."

"In short, that Etty, without being aware of it, was married under a wrong name?"

"Ay."

"But, Mr. Castleton, how would that affect the validity of the marriage?"

"Before the fourth year of George the Fourth the marriage would have been invalid; and there are cases on record of women who were unwittingly married under false names, by rascals who

in all probability knew that such a marriage was no marriage."

"What! was the marriage null where either party was the victim of fraud?"

"Yes."

"You surprise me!"

"I'll give you a piece of law, Miss Olive Blake. Under the 26th Geo. II., c. 38, if there was a total variation of a name or names, that is, if the bans were published in a name or names totally different from those which the parties, or one of them, ever used, or by which they were ever known, the marriage in pursuance of that publication was invalid; and it was immaterial in such cases whether the misdescription had arisen from accident or design, or whether such design were fraudulent or not."

"But that is not the law now? It was not the law at the time of Etty's marriage? Oh, say it was not!"

"I will, my dear Miss Blake. Do not frighten yourself. The law was altered by 4 Geo. IV., c. 76, s. 22, by which, in order to invalidate a marriage where such variation of names has been made, it is necessary to show that it was contracted with a knowledge by both parties of such a variation having been made."

"It is possible," I said, "that Lord Byfield was ignorant of the comparatively recent alteration in the law, and that he married Etty under a fictitious name, thinking that the ceremony would thereby be null."

"Possibly. Rogues are always fools. Lord Byfield is a cunning, polished, adroit man, but he is a rascal (for all his wealth and power); and a rogue, whatever natural and acquired advantages he may have, invariably shows himself in the long-run that which Coleridge defined him to be, 'a fool with a circumdendibus.' It may be that Lord Byfield, unaware of the improvement in the law, overlooked all the other consequences of a criminal conspiracy, in his anxiety to obtain possession of a beautiful girl by a form of marriage which should be no marriage."

"What would be the consequences of such a crime as we are imagining?"

"Well," said Mr. Castleton, with a laugh, "the crime with which I charge him in my imagination is so very vaguely shaped at present that I really can not reply to your question. Put me an exact case."

"Suppose Lord Byfield can be shown to have willfully and fraudulently made a false entry in any register of marriages, to what punishment is he liable?"

This conversation took place in Mr. Castleton's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields; and when I put him this "case" he rose from his seat, went to one of his shelves, and took down a volume, from which he read as follows:

"11 Geo. 4, & 1 Will. 4, c. 66, sec. xx.—That if any person shall knowingly and willfully insert, or cause or permit to be inserted, in any register of baptisms, marriages, or burials, which hath been or shall be made or kept by the rector, vicar, curate, or officiating minister of any parish, district-parish, or chapelry in England, any false entry of any matter relating to any baptism, marriage, or burial, or shall forge or alter in any such register any entry of any matter relating to any baptism, marriage, or burial; or

shall utter any writing as and for a copy of an entry in any such register of any matter relating to any baptism, marriage, or burial, knowing such writing to be false, forged, or altered; or if any person shall utter any entry in any such register of any matter relating to any baptism, marriage, or burial, knowing such entry to be false, forged, or altered, or shall utter any copy of such entry, knowing such entry to be false, forged, or altered, or shall willfully destroy, deface, or injure, or cause or permit to be destroyed, defaced, or injured any such register, or any part thereof; or shall forge or alter, or shall utter, knowing the same to be forged or altered, any license of marriage; *every such offender shall be guilty of felony, and, being convicted thereof, shall be liable, at the discretion of the Court, to be transported beyond the seas for life, or for any term not less than seven years, or to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding four years, or less than two years.*"

I can not describe the significance that Mr. Castleton threw into these last words.

As he concluded I seized the book and read and re-read the terrible words. I had never dreamed of such consequences being attached to such an act; never for one moment imagined the power I should have over Lord Byfield if I could prove him guilty of the crime of which I had vaguely and dimly suspected him, before Mr. Castleton so particularly and graphically suggested it in the conversation just narrated.

"You'd better take the book home with you," observed Mr. Castleton, smiling; "it seems to entertain you."

"Thank you, I will take it, and also say 'Good-morning.'"

Mr. Castleton gave me his arm and conducted me to my carriage, which waited for me in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

"Home," I said to the footman, as I stepped in the carriage—"and quick."

It was winter time; so I drew up the glasses. And then throwing myself back in my seat, I opened Mr. Castleton's terrible volume and read: "*Every such offender shall be guilty of felony, and, being convicted thereof, shall be liable, at the discretion of the Court, to be transported beyond the seas for life.*"

CHAPTER IX.

ST. DUNSTON'S, BIRMINGHAM.

RENEWED with hope, and in a far different frame of mind from that in which I had started for Monaco, I now resumed my investigations.

I procured the services of fresh agents, for though they were to act as copyists for me, they were to make their copies with a precision and accuracy that I had not before thought requisite. My new copyists were copper-plate engravers, and they were ordered to make for me fac-similes of the minutest exactness of every registration of a marriage in the week in which Etty was married. Before, I had had copies taken of all the certificates of an entire month; but now I was satisfied with the certificates of a week. The engravers were directed to make careful fac-similes, putting upon their copies every blot, smear, speck, or discoloration found in the orig-

inals. Of course their work was tedious and expensive; but I was determined to ruin myself pecuniarily rather than not accomplish my task, or leave it unaccomplished while a sixpence remained in my purse. Besides the expense of the engravers' labor, I (that is to say, Mr. Castleton, acting for me) had to pay heavy fees to the custodians of the archives for permission to take such copies. All I had legally a right to demand of the keepers of the registers was that they would give me substantially true copies of the certificates for a certain specified fee per copy. But as I wanted a fancy article I had to pay a fancy price for it. My fac-similes were as expensive a sort of literature as a lady ever indulged herself in.

For two years and three months I carried on this costly process without any result. Every fac-simile, as it came to me, I carefully examined under strong magnifying glasses, and scrutinized with a regard to those rules by which "experts" decide on the genuineness or identity or difference of various specimens of calligraphy. But not a fac-simile did I get, in return for all the money I was spending, that could be made a foundation of fresh confidence. At the end of my first year and a half of this work I had exhausted the London registers, and then my copyists were sent into the provinces. They had been working in provincial towns for about nine months; and though I did not exactly despair of ultimate success, I was beginning to be sorely worn with disappointment, when I received from the register of St. Dunstan's church, in Birmingham, a fac-simile of a certificate of a marriage between Arthur Feversham and Jeannette Freeman which caused my heart to beat high. The signature of the officiating clergyman was Charles Hobart, M.A. The attesting witnesses were Anne Walker and Herbert Johnson.

The first thing that attracted my attention in this fac-simile was the "Arthur Feversham," the *F* and the *v* of the Feversham being so formed that they closely resembled *P* and *t*. So strong was this resemblance that at the first glance I read the name Petersham, and not Feversham. Then my heart beat high for the first time. "Why," said I to myself, "may not that word have been so written for the express purpose of misleading the eye? but whose eye? not mine! whose eye could it have been intended to deceive?" My heart beat higher! Moreover, as I looked at the handwriting I could have sworn (seratchy and disguised though it was) that it was Lord Byfield's. It was just the writing of Lord Byfield when he was hurried, or tired, or ill. My heart leaped within as though it were mad.

But Jeannette Freeman. How about that? Let me see. Here is the signature. Jeannette Freeman. I look at it under my glass. Ha! Why is there that little dot after the second *e* of Freeman. A dot there! Why? A bride doesn't put a dot under a letter in the centre of her surname, as bank-clerks sometimes do to mark their signature. A lady making her signature in full might put a dot after the *last* letter of her surname, but after no other. But then, again, why does that second *e* of Freeman fit so awkwardly on to the *man*? Why, the up-stroke of the *e* runs into the *m* like a needle! Surely then *man* has been added on by another hand.

The original name ended with the second *e*. Now let me examine the *F* of *Free*. Why two strokes of a pen change *T* into *F*? And now I look at it, the top of the *F* and the down-stroke have not been made without taking pen from paper, as is usual in a running hand; but they were made separately. See, too, the little thin up-stroke going up to the top of a *T*—not an *F*! Clearly, the original name was *Tree*; the *T* was altered into an *F*, and the *man* was added. So *Tree* was made *Freeman*. But the Christian name—Jeannette? Ah, that is clear, too: Etty still always writes the initial letter of her Christian name (Annette) in round character, and not with a pointed top. Her *A* is not a wedge with a dash across. No. Annette was the original name, and *Je* has been added on (see how large the *A* of Jeannette is); and so Annette Tree has been turned into Jeannette Freeman!

I rose from my seat with the fac-simile clutched in my hand. A mirror was before me; and happening to glance at it, and see my own semblance on its bright surface, I was really frightened with the disorder and triumph of my appearance; the flush of my cheeks and the wild gleam of my eyes.

I had been alone while I examined the fac-simile; but now as I stood surveying myself in the mirror the door opened, and Etty came into the room.

"Why, Olive," she cried, with unusual animation, "what makes you look so terribly happy?"

"Good news, my dear!" I answered. "The postman has brought me good news; but never mind at present what it is. Let us go to breakfast, and afterward you must drive with me into town, to Mr. Castleton's chambers."

"Is the news about me?" Etty inquired

"It is, but ask no questions about it. I must be obeyed."

"I will obey you, dear!" Etty said, meekly—and when she had uttered the words I saw by the light of her violet eyes that she was thanking Heaven for "the good news," of which I thought it right still to keep her in ignorance.

On arriving in Lincoln's Inn Fields I left Etty in the carriage and went alone up stairs into Mr. Castleton's chambers. It was still early, but he was already in his office, immersed in papers, when I was admitted to him.

"Ah, my dear Miss Blake, I am glad to see you, but I am in the midst of a most heavy and perplexing case. Still I can attend to you. What is it?"

"Look at this fac-simile, under this glass, and let me meantime tell you what I see," I said.

He complied with my request, examining it intently, while I quietly unfolded to him my critical opinions on the signatures.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Castleton, flashing out at me streams of fire from his eyes, and stopping me in the midst of my exposition, "we have caught him at last. My dear Miss Blake, we must go down to Birmingham instantly."

"But you are engaged on an important case?"

"My dear Miss Blake, that *can* wait, *shall* wait, *must* wait. Birmingham, Birmingham! God bless Robert Stephenson for his London and Birmingham Railway! Let's see. It's now a quarter to eleven. If Miss Annette were here—"

"She is here—in the carriage at the door."

"Good! Then we'll catch the express and be in Birmingham by half past one. Just excuse me for three seconds and I'll come back in my hat and great-coat."

The three seconds were scarcely exceeded when Mr. Castleton returned, hatted and coated, with his managing clerk at his heels. "Now, Simpson," he said to his clerk, "you must manage to get on with that case to-day by yourself. You remember my instructions about it. I am going out of town on particular business, and most likely I shall not return to London to-day. Good-morning. Now, Miss Blake, I am at your service."

As we descended the wide staircase of the old mansion in which Mr. Castleton had his chambers I said to him, "Mr. Castleton, Etty is in the carriage, but she is quite ignorant of the nature of this morning's intelligence. I thought it best to keep her in the secret. Let us take her down to Birmingham, into the very church in which the fraud was consummated, without revealing to her the object of our journey, and perhaps her recognition of the place will be of such a kind as to give us serviceable evidence. We won't even tell her the name of the place to which we are bound."

"Quite right! quite right!" said Mr. Castleton, emphatically, as he helped me into my carriage, and then took a seat opposite to me and Etty, with his back to the horses.

Ere another quarter of an hour had passed we three were gliding along Robert Stephenson's iron rails, drawn by the ropes and stationary engines of the old system of that line. At Camden Town we left the ropes behind us. A locomotive engine having been harnessed to the train, we sped along at more than forty miles an hour. The whole way down the line Mr. Castleton and I remained silent, he with eyes fixed intently on the columns of the morning's *Times*, and I studying with a similar appearance of interest the new "Quarterly," and each of us caring as little for the printed words before us as if they had been thrown on the paper helter-skelter by a wild army of mad compositors. As for Etty, it was her first journey behind a steam locomotive, and she was too full of conjecture as to the nature of "the good news," of excitement consequent on her sudden removal from the quiet of my villa, and of wonder at the new method of traveling, to care for such ordinary gossip as we could carry on in a railway carriage, in the company of other passengers.

"Drive to a hotel," said Mr. Castleton to the fly-man, when he had put me and Etty into one of a string of public conveyances drawn up before the Birmingham station.

"Which hotel, Sir?" asked the man.

"The best, of course," answered Mr. Castleton, taking his seat in the fly—"the 'Warwick Arms.'"

"Yes, Sir."

At the end of another ten minutes we alighted at the door of the "Warwick Arms," which excellent family hotel, many of my readers doubtless know, stands in Gimp Street—a narrow thoroughfare in the very centre of Birmingham.

The landlord of the hotel came to receive us at the door.

"Can you let us have three good bedrooms and two sitting-rooms?" asked Mr. Castleton.

"Yes, Sir," was the answer.

So we entered the hotel, and passed through the rather narrow passage leading from the chief entrance to the interior of the house, and ascended a dark, gloomy staircase. As we were ascending that staircase Etty, who was walking close by my side, caught hold of my hand and cried in a stifled voice, "Oh, Olive!" I had scarcely time to answer to this exclamation, "What is the matter, dear?" when she fainted away, and fell into my arms.

I carried her into the nearest of the light airy sitting-rooms on the first floor, and with the aid of cold water, smelling salts, and wine, I soon had the pleasure of causing her to revive.

"Olive," she said, after a lapse of about twenty minutes, during the last ten of which she recollected her faculties and looked round the room, "I fainted away because I recognized this place. The excitement was too much for me. This is the hotel Major Watchit took me to. This is the very room we breakfasted in. I know it, although it has been altered in some respects, and has a different paper. Those three windows had the blinds drawn down over them."

"Surely, my dear," I answered; "they look into the street."

"Where is Mr. Castleton?"

"He has gone into the town, dear, for a few minutes. Be quiet, and calm."

"Where are we, Olive?"

"In Birmingham."

"Oh, Olive," she said, crying, "how could I have been married in Birmingham? And yet I remember this room so well."

As she uttered these few words Mr. Castleton returned, and said, "You remember this room, Miss Annette, you say. Do you think now you could lead us to the bedroom you occupied on the night before your wedding?"

"Oh yes," she said, quickly. "The door of the bedroom is immediately opposite the door of this room. It is a large room, with three windows. The two windows on the side of the room opposite the door overlook the hotel yard. The third window, which is in the most distant side of the apartment, is placed close against the corner. It does not correspond with the rest of the room, but seems to have been put in as an afterthought."

"Do you remember what that window overlooked?" asked Mr. Castleton.

"A church-yard."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes; for I sat for hours during the night looking at the church, and wondering whether it was the one I was to be married in."

Mr. Castleton rang the bell.

"Send the chambermaid here," he said to the waiter.

"Yes, Sir."

The chambermaid came, when Mr. Castleton said, "These ladies want to select bedrooms. Conduct them first into the bedroom the door of which is immediately opposite this; for one of these ladies has already occupied it, and would like to have it again if it is disengaged."

"The room opposite this room, Sir?" said the girl.

"Ay," responded Mr. Castleton, opening the

door of the room in which we were, and pointing with his finger to a door in the opposite wall of the staircase landing. "That is the door you mean, Miss Annette, is it not?"

"Yes," said Etty.

"That isn't a bedroom, Sir," answered the maid; "it's a sitting-room."

"What? Was it never a bedroom?"

"I can't say, Sir. It never was a bedroom since I knew it."

"How long have you been chamber-maid here?"

"Six years."

"Is there any servant in the hotel who was here sixteen years since? How long has the landlord been here?"

"Oh, Sir, master only took the hotel last year. But the upper house-maid has been here in the hotel twenty years. She has lived under four different landlords of the 'Warwick Arms.'"

"My good girl, there's half a crown for you. Now show us into the room of which we are speaking, and send the upper house-maid to us."

"Certainly, Sir."

In another half minute the girl had left us, in order to send the upper house-maid to us; and we were standing in the room, looking round it, and to our mortification finding in it only two windows. The windows overlooking the yard were there, but no third window having a view of the church-yard was to be seen.

In a minute the upper house-maid, a most respectable-looking woman, of about forty or five-and-forty years of age, was before us, and no sooner did she make her appearance than Mr. Castleton poured upon her a quick fire of questions.

"Was this room ever a bedroom?" he began.

"Yes, Sir," said the woman, opening her eyes with astonishment.

"When was it altered into a sitting-room?"

"About eight years since, Sir; just before Mr. Landers, who was the landlord of the 'Warwick Arms' when the room was altered, died."

"How long had it been used as a bedroom before it was so altered?"

"Oh, years and years, Sir. It was a bedroom before my time, and I've been in the hotel for twenty years. And since I came to be servant here it was a bedroom till Mr. Landers altered it. It was about the last thing he did, poor man."

"Had it ever a third window?"

"To be sure it had, Sir. It's clear you know all about the room. It had a window" (pointing) "right in the corner, overlooking St. Dunstan's church-yard, which is right at the back. Mr. Landers (who was rather a fanciful man in some things) said a *cross* light was bad for a sitting-room, and that the look-out on the grave-yard made the room unpleasant, so he had the window bricked up."

"Now," said Mr. Castleton, after a moment's pause, "it is of course the custom for the landlord to note down in his day-book or house-book, or whatever he calls it, the occupants of the rooms, just as he appropriates them to new visitors."

"Well, Sir, you'd find out by the ledger what parties were in the house on a particular night; but most generally the parties are known only by the numbers of the rooms they occupy. You see, Sir, if a gentleman takes 'bedroom 42,' he is entered in the ledger as 'No. 42,' with the

date against him, and 'gentleman' written after the date."

"Ay. You have a new landlord here? He came last year?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Do you happen to know if he has the old account-books of the establishment in Mr. Landers's time, and even prior to Mr. Landers's time?"

"No, Sir—he hasn't got them," answered the woman, proudly.

"How do you know that?"

"Because I have them. They are my property."

"Indeed!"

"You see, Sir, though I came here only as under house-maid, I was a scholar, and could keep accounts. Now, Sir, Mr. Holland (who was the first landlord I lived under here) was no great scholar. He could just write his name, but that's all he could do. He had to get some one to do his accounts for him, and first and last he was cheated out of a good deal of money by having to trust to dishonest people. Well, Sir, after he had tried a number of clerks, he found out (soon after I came to him) that I was a scholar and could keep books. So he made me upper house-maid, and gave me £25 a year to keep his books for him. Well, Sir, from that time till Mr. James, the present landlord, came, I kept the books of the hotel. I kept them in Mr. Holland's time, and Mr. Landers's time, and Mr. Smith's time; and when Mr. James came in last Michaelmas, I agreed to stop on with him in the 'Warwick Arms' for another year if he would let me take away the old books with me, which I had kept for so many years. And Mr. James, as he doesn't want me to keep the accounts, and as he keeps his accounts in a way quite different from my way, told me that 'old account-books' would be of no use to him, and he would make them a present to me. You see, Sir, the books had always gone along with the business as a part of the stock in trade."

"Then you are going to retire from service here?" I said.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the woman, with healthy pride and honest self-satisfaction, "and I'm going to live on my property. The 'Warwick Arms' have done well to me, just as I have done well to the 'Warwick Arms.'"

"Now," said Mr. Castleton, altering his tone of voice, now that he knew he was speaking to a lady of property, "for whatever information you give me I am willing to pay liberally. I want to find out who slept in this room in which we are now standing on the night of October —, 18—. Be good enough to bring your books here, and see if they will satisfy my curiosity."

The woman left the room and returned to us in about two minutes, bearing in her strong arms four account-books.

"Now," she said, putting her admired literary productions on the table, "what is the date?"

"The night of October the —st, 18—," answered Mr. Castleton.

The woman referred to the date in one of the books, and after glancing at the entry her face flushed up, and the light came into her eyes, as she exclaimed, "Why, Sir, you *can't* mean that after all these years you've come to make inquiries about that beautiful young lady?"

"What beautiful young lady?" asked Mr. Castleton.

"Why, Miss Freeman, to be sure, Sir—the lady who was married in that strange way more than fifteen years ago."

"Let me look at the entry."

The woman showed him the book, reading at the same time, "*No. 42. Bedroom taken for a lady by Mr. Arthur Feversham.*" "That, you see, Sir, was all I wrote at first. But after the lady left, and had been married in that mysterious way, I made a note by the side: '*Miss Freeman and Mr. Feversham married next day in St. Dunstan's church. Miss Freeman left a pocket-handkerchief behind her in the bedroom marked in cotton stitch 'Etty.'*' You see, Sir, I put that down just to keep the matter in my mind. But there was little need, Sir; for I and the clerk of St. Dunstan's have often talked it over and had a laugh about it, wondering whether my handkerchief and his glove would ever come to any use. For you see, Sir, he has a glove which—"

"Never mind the clerk's glove," put in Mr. Castleton, smartly; "he'll tell us all about that himself when he comes. I have sent for him. I have seen his wife, and she is going to send him. Let's keep to the point. You say that No. 42 was taken by Mr. Arthur Feversham. Had that gentleman been living in the hotel previously?"

"To be sure he had, Sir. He had rooms here for two months just before his marriage; but he occupied them only a part of the time. You see he kept here the number of days required by law before he could get a license from old Mr. Hobart, the rector of St. Dunstan's. Then he went away (but during his absence the rooms were kept for him all the same)."

"When did he give the order for this room?"

"Well, Sir, that I can't answer off-hand. Perhaps, if you gave me time, I might discover something in my books that would enable me to speak as to that. But I couldn't so speak now. You see, Sir, it's a long time since the gentleman was here."

"Exactly. Did Mr. Feversham lead a quiet life while he was an inmate of the hotel?"

"Very, Sir; he never seemed to have any business or callers. He always kept in his rooms reading all day. And what exercise he took was taken after dark. We couldn't at first make him out at all, none of us. But when we found out that, immediately after paying his bill and leaving the hotel, he was married to the young lady his friend had brought here to meet him overnight, we understood what the case was. Lord bless you, Sir, more than one secret marriage has taken place from the 'Warwick Arms' since I have been here. And—"

The woman was still speaking when the under chamber-maid of the hotel (the girl who had first attended to us) came up, and said the parish-clerk of St. Dunstan's (Mr. Godfrey) had called, and wished to speak to Mr. Castleton.

"All right," said Mr. Castleton, "send him up."

Mr. Godfrey came up stairs; and as he entered the room, and the door was closed by the under house-maid behind him, Mr. Castleton said to the upper chamber-maid, "As you and Mr. Godfrey have already talked this matter over, there is no need for you to leave the room

unless you wish. You would, perhaps, like to hear what I have to say to him."

"Thank you, Sir: I should like to stop."

So the woman remained in the room.

CHAPTER X.

EVIDENCE.

THE clerk of St. Dunstan's church was a very intelligent and superior person for a man in his humble rank of life. His age was seventy, but he looked much younger; and his bearing was such that had it not been for his provincial accent, and a few other peculiarities, he might have been introduced into the society of gentlemen as a gentleman without causing any surprise.

"You are the clerk of St. Dunstan's?" Mr. Castleton observed, upon his entrance.

"I am, Sir," answered Mr. Godfrey, bowing to me. Etty was sitting with her back turned to us, looking out of the window. Her veil also was drawn over her.

"I may as well inform you that I am a London solicitor, and that the men who have been lately making fac-similes of the certificates in your register of marriages, and whom you, as well as the vestry clerk of St. Dunstan's, have kindly assisted, are agents acting under my directions. I have this morning seen a fac-simile of a certificate of a marriage, solemnized in your church between a Mr. Arthur Feversham and a Miss Jeannette Freeman on the —th day of October, 18—. From what has dropped from the lips of this most respectable woman" (the upper house-maid courtesied her acknowledgment of the compliment) "I know that you remember the occurrence of the marriage."

"I remember it well," answered Mr. Godfrey.

"May I ask you (for my inquiries are of the highest importance) to state what intercourse you had with Mr. Arthur Feversham?"

"Certainly, Sir; and I will answer you to the best of my ability. The night before the marriage a gentleman called on me at my house, and told me that his friend Mr. Feversham was going to be married to a young lady named Freeman the next morning in St. Dunstan's church. He said Mr. Feversham had obtained a license through the Rev. Mr. Hobart (the late rector of the parish of St. Dunstan's, and one of the Surrogates of the diocese), and that Mr. Hobart had promised to officiate. He then said to me that there were reasons which made Mr. Feversham wish that the ceremony should be as private as possible; and he therefore asked me to keep the doors of the church shut, and also the iron gates of the church-yard closed to the public, and to admit no one. I said I should be happy to act in accordance with his wishes. He then put ten sovereigns on the table, and he requested me to take them as my fee. I said, 'That is a very large fee, Sir.' He answered, 'It is; but do not hesitate to take it, for I am a rich man, and I see that you are a person who, having taken a good fee from me, will feel it incumbent on your honor to perform thoroughly what you undertake to do.' So I took the fee, and promised to attend to his wishes. I saw no reason why I should not do so. Mr. Hobart, the rector, was to officiate, and had moreover granted the license;

I therefore had no grounds to suspect any thing wrong. A secret marriage need not be a wrong undertaking. A gentleman of great expectations may wish to marry a poor lady, and at the same time wish to keep his marriage unknown to powerful relations who would be offended at the lady's poverty. But still, Sir, all this had nothing to do with my duties as clerk. I only mention these matters, as they show why I did readily what I was ordered to do."

"Well? The marriage took place."

"Yes, Sir. The only persons present in the church were Mr. Arthur Feversham, Miss Jeanette Freeman, myself, the two witnesses, and the officiating clergyman. The two witnesses were a lady named Ann Walker, and the gentleman (named Herbert Johnson) who had called upon me on the previous night. Mr. Arthur Feversham I had not seen before I put my eyes on him in the church; but after the marriage I found out that he had had rooms for at least a couple of months at the 'Warwick Arms,' though he only inhabited them part of the time. Mr. Arthur Feversham didn't sleep at the 'Warwick Arms' the night before his marriage. He came into Birmingham, posting, early in the morning, bringing with him the old lady named Ann Walker. Leaving his carriage at the 'Warwick Arms,' he walked with the old lady down to the church, and there I saw her walking up and down before the church-yard rails on the pavement. I saw her as I entered the church to get all ready for the wedding. She came up to me, and said, 'Let me into the church, please; there is going to be a wedding.' 'I can't let you in,' I said, 'for the public are not to be admitted.' 'But,' she said, 'I am one of the party. Mr. Feversham has brought me with him to witness the marriage.' So I let her into the church. I had not as yet seen Mr. Feversham. It was while I was dusting and getting the church ready that the old lady told me about Mr. Feversham having left his carriage at the 'Warwick Arms,' and having led her to the gate of the church-yard, and having gone back to the 'Warwick Arms' to see the lady to whom he was about to be married."

"Exactly. Describe to me the appearance of Mr. Herbert Johnson."

"He was a very tall, thin, and tanned gentleman. I don't think I ever saw a man more sunburned. I may add, that I found out after the marriage that Mr. Herbert Johnson had brought Miss Freeman to the 'Warwick Arms' about an hour before he called at my house and made arrangements about the wedding—that is, on the night before the wedding."

"I understand. Go on."

"Well, Sir, the wedding took place in the usual way, the Reverend Mr. Hobart, (who has been dead more than ten years) performing the ceremony. The party came into the vestry to sign the register. I saw Mr. Feversham sign his name; and immediately he had done it he asked me to go and see that the carriages were ready. Mr. Hobart said, 'By all means, Godfrey, do so.' I therefore went. When I returned the party were already walking down the aisle to leave the church. I went straight to the vestry, and saw Mr. Hobart engaged in drawing out an attested copy of the certificate. It did not take him half a minute to finish. 'There,

Godfrey,' he said, 'run with that to Mr. Feversham. He is in a hurry, and waiting for it in his carriage.' Of course I did as I was told. When I got to the church-door (where not a minute before I had left two carriages) the foremost carriage was gone. I ran to the second carriage and looked in. 'Oh!' said Mr. Feversham, showing his face, 'you have brought the attested copy?' I answered, 'Yes, Sir,' and gave him the copy; and in another minute I went back to the vestry, feeling surprised."

"At what?"

"That Mr. Feversham should have left the church with the old lady named Ann Walker, and not with his bride."

"Certainly a most reasonable ground of surprise."

"It seemed to me to be very strange," rejoined Mr. Godfrey, "but I accounted for it by supposing that Mr. Feversham was afraid he might be recognized on the road by his friends, who, if they saw him traveling with a pretty young lady, might suspect he was married to her. Still it seemed an excess of caution."

"Did not you," asked Mr. Castleton, turning to the maid, "say something about a glove?"

"Ay, Sir," put in Mr. Godfrey, before the woman could answer the question for herself, "I was going back to the vestry, when I met Mr. Hobart hurrying down the aisle with a kid glove in his hand. 'Godfrey,' he said, 'Mr. Feversham has dropped one of his gloves.' 'Well, Sir,' I said, 'the gentleman has gone. It is too late to give it to him now.' So Mr. Hobart let the glove fall and I picked it up and kept it. Of course I was curious about this wedding; and having an acquaintance with Miss Brown" (pointing to the maid), "I saw her, and we talked it all over, she and I comparing notes with each other. When I told her about the gentleman's 'kid glove,' she told me about the lady's 'pocket-handkerchief.' And we have often, for all these years since, had a joke about our treasures, wondering whether any thing would come of them."

"Now," said Mr. Castleton to Miss Brown, "do you think that after all this lapse of years you should be able to recognize Mr. Feversham?"

"I would not say positively, Sir. Time alters people wonderfully; but I think I should know him. He was not an ill-looking gentleman, but he had a blemish on his face that I think I should know him by again. His upper lip was slightly scarred as if he had a wound upon it."

"I am *sure* I should know him again," said Mr. Godfrey, confidently, "by a different sign. While the wedding was going on I had to stand outside the rails of the communion-table, and just behind Mr. Feversham. That was my place. Well, Sir, Mr. Feversham wore his light hair long, so that I couldn't see the back of his neck, as the hair ordinarily hung. But once during the service he stirred a little (nervous, perhaps), and put his right hand to the back of his neck, and stroked his light curls down. Well, Sir, as he did that I saw on his flesh under the ends of the curls, and just above the back of his white shirt-collar, a crimson mark—a scar. I quite started; it was such a fierce red color."

As the man said this I started; for I recognized the movement he described as one of Lord

Byfield's nervous, fidgety tricks, which I had disliked as girl and woman. When he was animated in conversation, or was excited with playing cards, for instance, he used to be continually touching his long hair; and I, like the man, had often seen with repugnance the red sear so revealed.

"Mr. Godfrey and Miss Brown," said Mr. Castleton lastly, walking round the room in the direction of Ety, who still sat apart from us, closely veiled, "would you know Miss Freeman if you saw her, think you? Miss Annette, draw off your veil and bonnet—quick, my dear young lady!"

Ety did as she was bidden; the haste with which she obeyed her orders causing her fingers to catch in her hair, so that she not only pulled off her veil and bonnet, but at the same time also pulled down her rich, warm, golden tresses.

"Why," exclaimed both the man and woman together, "'tis she—it's Miss Freeman!"

"Dare you swear it?" asked Mr. Castleton of the maid.

"Yes, Sir, that I dar," answered Miss Brown, "though I didn't see much of the lady, and she wouldn't let me help her with her toilet."

"Dare you swear that is the lady who was married to Mr. Feversham?" then inquired Mr. Castleton of the clerk, who was steadily scrutinizing Ety.

"I would swear to her in any court of justice," said the man, earnestly.

CHAPTER XI.

MY POWER.

THE story which it is the object of these pages to tell would be in nowise developed or illustrated by my giving all the details of the conversations that passed between myself and Ety on the one hand, and the clerk of St. Dunstan's and the maid of the "Warwick Arms" on the other. The result of them is sufficient for the public.

I took Ety to the church, and immediately she entered it she recognized the sacred interior that had been indelibly printed on her memory. We stopped only one night in Birmingham, returning to London by an early train, so that we arrived at our destination before mid-day. In her traveling-case Ety held possession of the handkerchief which she had left more than fourteen years before in the "Warwick Arms." The light-pink kid glove, dropped by Mr. Arthur Petersham in the church on the occasion of the marriage, was in Mr. Castleton's keeping. Occupying a seat in the same railway-carriage with ourselves was Mr. Godfrey, the clerk, who at Mr. Castleton's request had obtained permission from his rector to visit London for a couple of nights.

When we arrived at the Euston Square Railway Station Mr. Castleton put me and Ety into a cab, which conveyed us straight to Fulham Villa; Mr. Castleton bidding us farewell for a few hours, and taking Mr. Godfrey with him to his house.

In the evening Mr. Castleton came alone to my villa, and found me in conversation with Mr. Clarges and Ety.

"Well, Castleton," cried Dr. Clarges, im-

mediately Mr. Castleton made his appearance, "have you any further discoveries to report? Of course these ladies have told me every thing that had transpired when you ran away from them at the Euston Square Station. Tell me news, or tell me nothing."

"How frail and brittle is the covering with which the darkest and most mysterious crimes are concealed!" observed my splendid solicitor, in a sententious and moralizing strain. "The evidence of the wicked deed is packed up in a small space, as kid gloves are packed by French milliners into nut-shells, and it is very hard to find it. The detective goes about the world picking up nuts and cracking them, but not one nut in a thousand contains the kid glove for which he is looking. But when he does get the right nut the shell is cracked and broken in a twinkling, and out comes the *kid glove*."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Dr. Clarges, in high spirits. "The poetry of law! Sentimental reflections by a successful legal practitioner! But speak no more parables. Give us the history of the pink *kid glove*; at least if you have a veritable history to entertain us with."

"I traced it to Lord Byfield in half an hour," answered Mr. Castleton, triumphantly. "Of course the evidence I will now lay before you is superfluous and needless. But I have an artistic pleasure in making a case complete and thoroughly finished at every point. That glove was one of Merlin's—the Regent Street glover. Merlin is one of my clients. So I go (knowing the man well) straight to him, and say, 'Mr. Merlin, had you, fifteen or sixteen years since, Mr. Arthur Petersham, now Lord Byfield (the great banker), on your books as a customer?' 'He has been our customer for thirty years,' answers the glover. 'Then be good enough, my dear Mr. Merlin,' I say, 'to refer back in your books to October 18—, and see if in or shortly before that month you supplied Lord Byfield with any gloves.' 'I will do so,' responds Mr. Merlin, proceeding to turn over the leaves of an old ledger. 'Let me see, the year 18—! ha, ha! Arthur Petersham, Esquire! To be sure, Mr. Castleton, 18— was the year in which light-pink kid gloves were so much in fashion with the dandies, and I sent Mr. Arthur Petersham, in the month of September, in the year you mention, four cases of such gloves, each case containing a dozen.' 'Perhaps that was one of them, Mr. Merlin,' I say, taking the glove out of my pocket. 'No doubt,' he said; 'there's my trade mark upon it. And do you see that *catch* on the glove?' 'Yes.' 'That was a foolish invention of mine. It was intended to supersede the old button and button-hole. That invention of mine had just three weeks' existence. I had the catch put on hundreds of dozens of gloves, but it turned out so badly, and we had so many complaints made about it by customers, that I had to set hands to work to take my pet catch off the gloves, and furnish them with the old-fashioned means of fastening.' 'That freak of invention,' I observe, 'must have cost you a considerable amount of money.' 'Oh, the money I spent on the patent, and manufacture, and fitting of my useless catches was no matter. The worst part of the failure was the loss of temper it occasioned me. By the end of three weeks from the time that I saw the first catch used I had not one of the

silly contrivances in my stock.' 'And it was during that period of three weeks you sent four boxes of them to Mr. Petersham.' 'Exactly so; but what makes you so curious about such a trifle?' 'Oh, nothing, only curiosity,' I answer. 'So I supposed,' rejoins Mr. Merlin, dryly."

"How wonderful and merciful an arrangement it is," I observed, "that guilt can not hide its own traces!"

"And," added Dr. Clarges, "how much more wonderful, and much more merciful an arrangement it is that virtue is equally powerless!"

"Dear Dr. Clarges," Etty said, softly, "good-night; Mr. Castleton, good-night. My boy will one day thank you as I could wish to do myself!"

She moved to the door, which Mr. Castleton, rising, opened for her. As she passed my chair she stooped down and kissed me, whispering as she did so, "Olive, come to me before you go to bed; come and say prayers with me."

When Etty had taken her departure Dr. Clarges inquired of Mr. Castleton, "What do you intend to do with the clerk, Godfrey?"

"Will you be at the *soirée* of the Royal Society at the President's house to-morrow evening?" rejoined the solicitor.

"Yes," replied Dr. Clarges.

"So will Lord Byfield. He has promised the President to attend."

"Well?"

"So will I also be there. So also will Mr. Godfrey."

"Ah! I understand."

"I shall say to Godfrey, 'Now walk among this assemblage of gentlemen, and if you think you see Mr. Arthur Feversham, just inform me of the circumstance!' I had thought of introducing him to the 'Moumouth,' which is Lord Byfield's favorite whist club, but we should not be so secure of seeing him there, and we should run greater risk of provoking observation. Godfrey will pass muster admirably at the *soirée*. The difference in appearance between a *savant* and a parish clerk is often but slight."

"An admirable arrangement!"

The next evening was the *soirée* of the Royal Society, and on the morning succeeding the *soirée* Mr. Castleton rode his roan cob over to Fulham and gave me a call before breakfast.

"The experiment of last evening succeeded admirably," he said. "I took him so that we arrived just in the fullest of the crush. Lord Byfield never goes early any where. We passed half a dozen times through Lord Marshallhaven's brilliant suit of rooms without meeting the object of our search. More than one F.R.S., as he shook hands with me, whispered, 'Who is your friend? Is he one of us?' I suppose we had been there an hour when Godfrey touched my arm, and was proceeding to point with his finger to Lord Byfield (who had just entered the assembly). Luckily I prevented him from doing that, and said, 'Lead me through the room, and when we pass Mr. Feversham squeeze my arm.' Acting on these instructions, Godfrey led me close past Lord Byfield (who was carrying on an animated conversation with the Lord Chancellor), and squeezed my arm as he did so. Lord Byfield's eye caught mine, and he recognized me, though we had not met each other for at least eight years. 'Ah, ah, C-Castleton,' he said,

holding out his hand to me, 'I'm g-glad to see you! W-why d-don't you ever come and see me in Piccadilly?' I responded to this address by slightly shaking his hand and making a civil speech of a few words; *but I was careful not to address him by his title.* Then I and my companion proceeded to the door, where we turned round and took a back view of Lord Byfield, still talking to the Lord Chancellor. Perhaps my appearance, reminding him of old times, had agitated Lord Byfield; but any how, as we looked at him from behind, he had recourse to his old nervous, fidgety trick of smoothing his long hair, which I doubt not he wears long for the express purpose of hiding the scar of the surgeon's knife on the back of his neck. He stroked his locks, and as he did so I and Godfrey saw the crimson of the old wound. We exchanged significant glances, and then I led my companion out of the assembly. On the staircase, as we were leaving Lord Marshallhaven's house, he said, 'Then you know Mr. Feversham?' 'Oh yes,' I answered, carelessly, 'he is an old friend of mine. Didn't you see how we shook hands?'"

"Where is he now?"

"The clerk?"

"Yes."

"He is on his way back to Birmingham. I sent him off by the early seven o'clock A.M. train, with twenty guineas in his pocket."

"Are you sure that he does not know who Mr. Arthur Feversham really is?"

"Quite."

"That the mystery is all our own?"

"It is all our own," observed Mr. Castleton; "and I don't see how any one, without our permission, is to share it with us. Sir George Watchit and the clergyman are dead; the aged female witness (Ann Walker, or Mrs. Spencer, or whoever she was) is also doubtless dead by this time. The clerk and the maid-servant are never likely to cross Lord Byfield's path; and with the exception of you, me, Dr. Clarges, our friend Annette, and Lord Byfield himself, there is not a person in all the world who even suspects the crime that has been perpetrated. As for Dr. Hankinson, he has been completely mystified by Dr. Clarges. Dr. Hankinson is quite convinced in his own mind of his old patient's insanity on *one* subject; and if he at all suspects Miss Blake of Fulham to have once been Lady Byfield, he only imagines that you are taking care of the 'mad woman' in the amiable and wifely hope of making her an instrument of inflicting pain on your husband. All the proofs are in your hands. You can reduce Lord Byfield to the rank of a felon. You can force him to accept any terms you like to offer. The proofs are yours, do what you like with them."

CHAPTER XII.

MY PLEASURE.

MR. CASTLETON'S last words were, "The proofs are yours, do what you like with them."

I proceeded to do my pleasure with them, and what my pleasure was shall be told in this chapter.

It was on the 2d of June, in the fifteenth year after Etty's flight from Laughton, and the hour

was ten o'clock p.m., when I alighted from my carriage at Hyde Park, near Apsley House, and told the servants to drive straight back to Fulham Villa, as I should not want them again that evening. As soon as my horses and servants were out of sight I walked quickly along Piccadilly, under the trees, on the park side of the thoroughfare, till I came opposite to Lord Byfield's mansion. To my vexation I found the reception-rooms brilliant with illuminations, and the road before the house (already, at ten o'clock) blocked up with carriages. The lord of the mansion was clearly giving an entertainment of unusual splendor, and I had been misled in forming my arrangements; most probably my servants and Lord Byfield's having unconsciously mystified each other by some such ordinary phrase as "that Lord Byfield would be 'at home' on the 2d." Any how I had come from Fulham to Piccadilly in the expectation of catching Lord Byfield alone in his residence on his return from his whist club, and behold, Petersham House stood before me, lucent from garret to basement, crowded with guests, and every minute receiving a fresh influx of patrician visitors from the carriages that continued without cessation to "draw up" and "set down!" It was strange that I had not seen any announcement of the approach of such festivity in the fashionable "morning paper!" It was strange that I should have been misled at all on such a simple matter affecting my *husband's* domestic arrangements. There was, however, only one thing for me to do (since I was bent on seeing Lord Byfield that night)—to wait, namely, until his visitors had departed.

Fortunately it was a beautiful June evening (such an evening as is rarely experienced in early June), dry, cloudless, and without a breath of east wind. The moon was up in the quiet heavens, covering with soft effulgence the green sweeps and foliage of the parks and the roofs of the palaces in Piccadilly, under which, on the hard, clean road, the equipages chased each other to and fro, with a steady current of pedestrians flowing along upon the foot-paths of either side, under the merry garish street lamps. So I resolved to wait patiently till Lord Byfield's labors of hospitality should come to a close.

His guests were both distinguished and numerous. The armorial devices on the carriages which brought to Petersham House that night a perfect mob of haughty dames, brilliant with the flash of diamonds, and graceful, timid girls peering about with dazzled eyes at the wonders of their "first season," showed that Lord Byfield had outlived the temporary disgrace of the scandal of more than nine years since. He had been pardoned. English society is not uncharitable; it often pardons offenders—and when it has so generously pardoned them, it sometimes falls into the grave error of loving them somewhat too dearly, not out of memory of their sins, but out of memory of the generosity with which those sins were forgiven.

Keeping my veil close over my face, I walked up and down Constitution Hill, Park Lane, Audley Street, and such like thoroughfares, surveying the palaces in which, years before, I was a constant visitor. The season was at its height. There were several great affairs going on in the mansions of the aristocracy, but of

them all "the ball" at Petersham House was the event of the evening.

At twelve o'clock the rout was at its height. The omnibuses and hackney-carriages had almost disappeared from the thoroughfares of that patrician quarter; but the number of private equipages rumbling over Macadam's crushed stone, or clattering over the granite blocks, increased with the passage of every minute. The carriages were still employed in bringing guests; and before the doors of Petersham House were gathered a crowd of poor people, who amused themselves with cheering the fresh arrivals, and striving to get glimpses of the ladies as they tripped from the concealment of their carriages to the concealment of the awning that ran from the entrance of the house down to the pavement. "They had better be in bed, poor creatures!" I said to myself, looking at the crowd. And then the reflection shot across me that, perhaps, many of them had not a bed to go to.

Then I left Piccadilly for a short time, and wandered quite alone under the rails of Hyde Park, recalling all the facts that I knew of Lord Byfield's career since I had separated my life from his. I was familiar with much of it.—Having attained the especial dignity which he and his father before him had aimed at winning by the possession of land, Lord Byfield had steadily followed out the purpose of his life—to make himself the most powerful banker of the country, and one of the most important monetary powers of Europe. Caring nothing for the solid substance of territorial position so long as he enjoyed the titles of territorial rank, he had, as occasion served, converted his various landed properties back into personal estate, so that he might have the greater funds at command to carry on his vast undertakings. He still retained Burstead House, in Hampshire, with its noble park and small estate—the rental of which was not at the utmost £5000 per annum; but otherwise he had not a rood of freehold land that he could call his own. He did not want a long list of clownish tenants, paying their rents out of turnip husbandry, or rendering tribute from fatted pigs. That was not his ambition. The men he wished to have bowing before him, and asking in humble terms for the privilege of utilizing his vast wealth, were monarchs and their ministers. These, and not the rude boors of barbarous provinces, were to be his tributaries, and pay him fealty! Such was his aim, and he had achieved it.

At two o'clock the number of carriages was rapidly lessening before Petersham House. Every minute an equipage drove off from the entrance, and no "fresh arrivals" replaced "the departures." At a quarter to three the windows were still as bright as ever, and the music of the band playing to the dancers still continued; but the crowd before the house had so thinned that I said to myself, "Lord Byfield's most distinguished guests have taken their departure. Those who remain are the less important people: and he (according to his old wont on such occasions) has retired to his library for solitude and rest, and even a nap, before saying a final farewell to the most persevering of the dancers. I will now go into the house and see him."

So saying, I worked my way through the crowd and was taking a first step under the awning,

when a servant in livery stationed there said, "This is not public, ma'am."

"I am a friend of Lord Byfield's," I answered.

"What name, ma'am, please?"

To this inquiry, civilly put by the man in the proper discharge of his duty, I answered by drawing up my veil and showing him my face. For a few seconds he did not remember me; but when I whispered, "I am Lady Byfield, your old mistress," he started back with astonishment, and making me a respectful salute allowed me to pass on without further question.

I ascended the high flight of steps, and passing over the threshold encountered the old porter, sleepy and exhausted with his night's work.

"Is Lord Byfield in the library?" I inquired of the old man.

"Good Heavens! my lady; and at this time of night!"

"Is Lord Byfield in the library?" I repeated, quietly.

"Yes, my lady, I believe he is."

"Alone?—is he alone?"

"Oh yes, my lady; he is taking a nap, and mayn't be disturbed."

"I will go to him."

"Here, John!" cried the porter to one of the footmen standing about the hall in Lord Byfield's library.

"No, no," I said, seeing the porter's object. "I require no one to conduct me. Surely I can find my way about my own house."

Little noise as I made in speaking to the porter, my appearance I saw created a sensation among the by-standers. Habited in a plain, sober walking costume, I stood in marked contrast to two pretty girls who glided past me in white silk dresses, with their bright opera hoods only in part concealing their snowy shoulders. Each of the girls was leaning on the arm of a mustached cavalier, who seemed well to enjoy the task of leading so elegant a creature to her carriage. There were other people (not servants) in the hall and on the staircase; but though I had a lively sensation of being stared at by people who recognized me, I distinguished no one as an old acquaintance.

In less than two minutes I had opened the library door and entered the room, which was lighted with lamps suspended from the lofty ceiling. The lamps were surrounded with pink silk shades, so that the rays they emitted were rendered very pleasant to the eye, and gave a delicate rose tint to the paper and ceiling of the room.

"A-ha! wh—who i—is there?" said Lord Byfield, springing up from the sofa on which he was reclining as I entered and closed the door behind me.

He was in evening costume, and doubtless supposed at first that I was only a guest, who had mistaken my way through the hall and passages, and had entered a room not just then devoted to the uses of hospitality. But when he saw me in my ordinary walking costume he was undeceived.

"Wh-what!" he exclaimed. "Wh-what! L-Lady Byfield!"

"Yes, my lord. This is a strange hour to break upon you in. But my particular business must be my apology for disturbing you."

"B-business, L-Lady Byfield? I thought all our business with each other had ceased at your request. But I am yours to command."

"I shall detain you some little time," I said, composedly. "Are we secure from disturbance here?"

The brief space of time consumed in exchanging these words had enabled him to regain his composure; and now with his habitual politeness and with less hesitation he said, "Wh-whatever y-your business is, Lady Byfield, it gives me genuine pleasure to see you again in your own house. I will soon secure us from intrusion. There now, none of my merry guests will disturb us."

As he spoke he came round to the door and barred it; and then, bowing to me, led the way to the sofa, on which he had been lying.

"There," he said, "Lady Byfield, rest yourself on that sofa. I was napping on it, literally wearied out by my rout."

I sat down on the sofa in order that he might be seated; and then I said, "I came into Piccadilly at ten o'clock, hoping to see you then; but as you were already receiving visitors I waited till you should be disengaged."

"Th-thank y-you; th-thank y-you. The fact is, such an affair as to-night's entertainment is a most unusual thing with me. But, owing to Lady Marshallhaven's goodness in playing the part of hostess, it has gone off admirably."

I saw that he had pleasure in mentioning to me the goodness of so distinguished and exemplary a peeress as Lady Marshallhaven.

"B-but," he added, "wh-what gives me this unexpected pleasure?"

"I wished to speak to you about Etty Tree, Lord Byfield," I said.

"A-ay, a-ay?" he exclaimed, looking at me with a startled expression.

I was silent.

"H-have y-you heard any thing of her?"

"Don't you mean—'Have you found her?'"

"S-surely, e-exactly. T-that i-is what I mean."

"I want to know, Lord Byfield, if you can tell me any thing of her."

"I-I t-told you, years since, Lady Byfield, that I knew nothing of her."

"Lord Byfield, if it were possible for you to speak to my question without falsehood or evasion, you would say, 'Three days after she disturbed you in Grosvenor Square I caused Sir Charles Norton to sign an order, committing her to confinement as a lunatic in 'Belle Vue,' Dr. Hankinson's asylum in Berkshire—Dr. Atkins and Dr. Teesdale being induced by my misrepresentations to sign a certificate of her mental insanity. I sent her to 'Belle Vue;' and there she has been ever since, Dr. Hankinson having received from me £400 per annum for keeping her a prisoner. And there she is a prisoner at this time.'"

"W—who t-told y-you this?" stammered Lord Byfield.

"Never mind, my lord," I answered, "where I acquired my information. If you had made me the answer I have just now hypothetically placed in your lips the statement would have been erroneous in one respect."

He started up again—and again sank back into his chair.

"Etty Tree is not in confinement in 'Belle Vue.'"

A deadly pallor came over his face.

"Etty Tree," I continued, speaking very slow-

ly, "has not seen the inside of 'Belle Vue' for nearly eight years."

"W—what?"

"Ay, my lord, won't you prosecute Dr. Hanksin for taking your £400 per annum, and playing you false? Etty Tree has been my guest at Fulham for more than seven years and eleven months."

"G—go o—on, th—that's not all."

"No, it is not all. I will go on; but first I must take you back many years, to the time when my dear father was alive. (May he not in heaven have looked down upon the sin of this world!) I must go back to the time when he and your father (an honorable man, whose only sin was a mean ambition) were closely united friends, and first conceived the plan that I, a little girl just five years old, and you, a promising lad at college, and fifteen years my senior, should eventually marry, and unite their vast fortunes. You (youth that you were) were from the outset of your life acquainted with this plan, and eagerly (with that inordinate passion for money which characterized you when you were a beardless youth not less than it does now) embraced an arrangement which would eventually give you for a bride the richest heiress of England. For such a prize you were ready to wait, all through the long years of youth, till you married; but you were not ready to abstain from indulgence in those pleasures which are sweetest in youth. There was your difficulty. For you knew that my father would never let his child be the wife of a libertine. But you soon devised a scheme for indulging your love of money and love of what is far baser than money at the same time. You were traveling in Italy with your school friend Watchit; and in Monaco you found a retreat where you thought you could commit any sin without risk of detection. At Castellare you might keep your mistresses without any fear of scandal, beyond the circle of a few villages, never visited at that time by Englishmen. You acted on this plan, which the ample fortune left you by your grandfather, and the additional liberality of your father, enabled you to carry out. You fitted up a retreat at Castellare, you enjoyed yourself there, visiting it periodically in your yacht. But whatever deed of folly or shame you perpetrated it was under the disguise of your friend Watchit's name. When George Watchit was with his regiment in India there was a George Watchit also living in Monaco—and that George Watchit was yourself.

"Lord Byfield, you have always been persistent in your undertakings and tenacious of your purposes. The course that you began as a mere boy you persevered in till the very time that you led me to the altar, dishonoring me with your vile machinations. Etty Tree was *your* victim at Castellare—and the last of a series of victims. She was *not* Sir George Watchit's victim!"

I paused and looked at him as he sat, fidgeting his fingers and stroking his long hair.

"W—well, w—well!" he stammered, wishing to know *all*, and fearful of committing himself.

"And Etty Tree was not your mistress—she was your *wife*!"

Again he started, and a mingled expression of fear and diabolic malevolence crossed his face as he did so.

"You tried to seduce her from Laughton to

be your *mistress*. But you could not succeed. So you offered her marriage, saying to her, 'You shall be my wife. I will sacrifice Olive Blake's £450,000 to my love of you. Only our marriage must be secret—and *kept secret till my father's death*.' The foolish child consented, and you *married her*. Your friend Watchit conveyed her to a city you told her was London, and took her to a church which you told her was St. Thomas's, Kennington; and in that church you married her. But the town to which she was conveyed was Birmingham—not London; and the church in which the marriage was solemnized was St. Dunstan's in Birmingham. The clergyman who performed the service was Mr. Hobart; and the license permitting the marriage was made out for a marriage between Arthur Feversham and Jeannette Freeman. Mr. Hobart called the deluded girl Jeannette, doubtless; but to the ear and the tongue of a nervous girl, during the solemnization of her marriage, Jeannette and Annette are names, for all practical purposes, identical; so that when you, *Arthur*, promised to take her, *Jeannette*, and she, *Annette*, promised to take you, *Arthur*, in wedlock, there was no sufficient difference of sound to arouse the suspicions either of her or the clergyman. The marriage rites over, you signed your name *Arthur Feversham* in the register in such a manner that at first sight the surname looks more like *Petersham* than *Feversham*. So she saw nothing in your signature to rouse her suspicions. Then the female witness signed her name; and, lastly, your accomplice Watchit took the pen in hand. He did more than sign his assumed name; he altered *Annette* into *Jeannette*, and *Tree* into *Freeman*. The forgery was adroitly managed. No single stroke of the original signature was obliterated; *only additions* were made. The forger worked skillfully, and with a sense of security; for you had sent the clerk away to look after the marriages, and you also engaged the aged and unobservant clergyman in conversation, so that no eyes might be upon your companion in crime. Then you left the church—you in the carriage with the woman who signed her name *Ann Walker*, and your accomplice in the carriage containing the woman you had just married; you taking one road to London, and Watchit bearing off your victim by another road to Bristol—not to Dover."

As I came to a pause the man rose shaking in every limb, and the lips of his bloodless face having scarce power enough to obey his will.

"W—what w—w—w—nesses h—have y—you t—to th—this m—mad st—story?" he could just stammer out.

"Sit down," I said, quietly, "and I will tell you."

He sat down obediently, watching me intently, as if he wished to see the words as they came from my lips.

"You may well ask for my evidence, Lord Byfield," I continued. "Mr. Hobart, the clergyman, is *dead*. The woman who signed her name Ann Walker is *dead*. Sir George Watchit is *dead*. Your victim 'Etty' is *mad*—proved *mad* by the certificate of two most honorable physicians. You want my evidence. Why, man, isn't the *fact* of my telling you the secret of your life's crime sufficient evidence against

you? Is not the fact of your anxiety to confine Annette for life, as a lunatic, sufficient evidence against you? Why need I tell you that wearing apparel marked with your victim's name, and left for nigh fifteen years in the 'Warwick Arms,' is evidence against you? that your glove dropped in the church during the ceremony is evidence against you? that the best 'experts' of London are ready to swear that the Arthur Ferversham of the register is in your handwriting, and to be evidence against you? that the maid of the 'Warwick Arms' remembers you and remembers your victim also? that witnesses are ready to come from Monaco and give evidence against you? Do you want more evidence? It would weary me to tell you all the evidence I have against you. Let me finish. Etty, your wronged wife (and no *maut girl*) is evidence against you, ready to appeal to the laws for protection and justice. I (the victim of *you*, who are that vulgar criminal, a bigamist) am evidence against you. The clerk of St. Dunstan's church is evidence against you. Mr. Castleton took him to the *soirée* of the Royal Society a few evenings since. You spoke to Mr. Castleton yourself. The man walking with him as you did so was the clerk of St. Dunstan's, taken to that assembly for the express purpose of identifying you—as a *felon liable to the punishment of transportation for life!*

"Lord Byfield, no man (however rich and powerful he may be) should play the rogue who has such a brand as you have on your upper lip, and such a scar as you have on the back of your neck!"

I ceased, rising as I brought this last scornful speech to a conclusion. The man, too, also rose, shaking convulsively in every limb. In another instant he was groveling at my feet, and plucking at the skirts of my dress, and imploring for mercy. "O-oh, m-mercy, m-mercy. B-be m-merciful in your vengeance."

"Vengeance!" I cried. "I am not the minister of *vengeance*, but *justice*."

"O-Olive, d-don't expose me. A-any thing, a-any thing you will. M-my w-wealth to the last penny of it is yours; b-but d-don't expose me. D-don't g-give the extreme punishment in your power. B-by th-the memory of our fathers do not bring the world's scorn on the house of Petersham and Blake. I crave only safety from exposure. O-oh, d-don't make me a-a-a fe-felon!"

As I surveyed the sordid creature rolling at my feet, and imploring to be preserved from the scorn of that world which he had been wont to speak of so contemptuously, and which it had been his ambition to rule, a feeling of scorn (*scorn* in all the anguish, and bitterness, and fear which accompanies that hateful emotion when it is roused to its fullest intensity) came over me, and for a few seconds I could scarce regard him as of human kind. And then it flashed upon me how that unclean creature, by practicing on the worst qualities of my nature, had for a brief period exercised undisputed dominance over me, and I fell into the profoundest depth of humiliation and self-abasement; while a still small voice made itself heard within me, saying, "Such is the nature of evil. It works by sympathy. Olive Blake, that loathsome thing licking the dust at your feet is—*Satan incarnate!*"

"Get up from the ground, you miserable thing!" I said. "Don't kneel to me. Kneel to God, and ask his pardon."

These words were uttered as they were felt, not scornfully, but solemnly; and they had such an effect on the culprit that he slowly rose from the ground and seated himself again on his chair, his shoulders drooping, and his haggard face hanging forward.

I glanced round, and saw on a side-table decanters of wine, a bowl of ice, and some glasses—doubtless placed there for the especial convenience of Lord Byfield when he might retire during the evening from the festivity of his reception-rooms for rest and refreshment in his library.

I went to the table, and having poured out a tumbler of wine and put a liberal allowance of broken ice in it, I took it to Lord Byfield, and said, "Drink that!" He looked at me with surprise, and then obeyed me mechanically.

While he was taking the iced wine I went to the table and in like manner refreshed myself.

"Are you better?" I asked, after the lapse of a couple of minutes, returning, as I spoke the words, to his side.

"L-Lady B-By—," he began to address me.

"Call me *Miss Blake*," I said. "Etty is Lady Byfield."

"M-Miss B-Blake," he resumed, looking pitiously at me, "th-the gl-glass of wine you gave me is an earnest that you will s-spare me."

"Listen, Arthur Petersham!" I answered. "Reply to my questions, and attend to every word I say."

"I-I w-will."

"Have you made a will?"

"N-no! n-no," he replied, the tears coming into his eyes. "I-I h-have n-never cared to make a will s-since I destroyed the one I made in the second year of our—"

He paused.

"I understand," I said, "and I can even thank you for pausing. If you were to die to-night, who would be the legal inheritors of your property?"

He paused, and seemed doubtful what reply to make. For a moment I thought he was still bent on fighting with me, even in his humiliation not despairing of securing by artifice an advantage for himself. But this suspicion was proved in the next moment to be erroneous, when he said, "Sh-she h-had a child."

"That child is alive," I said. "I have educated him for many years. That is to say, I have paid for his education. Now answer my question."

"H-he a-and Etty would be legally entitled to all my possessions."

"Exactly. Now attend to me; and understand, Arthur Petersham, that I will not speak one single word—either of menace or promise—which I will not carry out literally! You have inflicted on me the greatest wrong that man can inflict on a woman; and in wronging *me* you wronged the daughter of a man who was your father's dearest friend, and who, moreover, evinced his strong friendship to you by the provisions of his will. For years I have been engaged on the task of tracking out your guilt, and I have succeeded. I hold in my own hands the evidence which would reduce you to a fel-

on's ignominy, and consign you to servitude for life. But that evidence is known only to three persons besides myself—to your wife, Mr. Castleton, and Dr. Clarges. Your wife, in gratitude to me for the services I have rendered her in proving the fact of her marriage, will be guided in her conduct implicitly by my will. Mr. Castleton and Dr. Clarges (two men whose characters you are familiar with) will also be ruled altogether by my wishes. I therefore may speak of myself as holding your fate in my hands. If I will it, you are a felon, liable to a felon's punishment for the rest of your days. If I permit it, you may continue to live without undergoing the extreme of ignominy. I told you just now I did not appear as the minister of *vengeance*, but of *justice*. I will show you that my words were strictly true. I will spare you the anguish of exposure and servile degradation, and I will even maintain you in the possession of dignity and moderate affluence; but I will only show you such mercy on certain conditions."

"N—name th—them, Miss Blake," he exclaimed, with a voice and glance of intense excitement.

"Your vast property consists almost entirely of personal estate," I said.

"I—t d—does."

"You have sold all your landed properties with the exception of the Hampshire estate?"

"B—Burstead i—is all the land I have," he answered.

"Now attend."

"I—I d—do."

"Arthur Petersham, basely as you have treated her, you can trust to the honor of Olive Blake?"

"I—I c—can—and her mercy too."

"Her honor and her mercy are all you can trust to in the bargain you must forthwith make. If you will forthwith pay over to my friends, Mr. Castleton and Dr. Clarges, every farthing of your personal estate, whether it be three millions or six millions of money, to hold in trust for the use and advantage of your wife, Lady Byfield, known in my house as Annette Tree, and of her son—at present a boarder in Dr. Renter's boarding-school at Blackheath, under the name of Arthur Williams (the exact terms of the trust to be fixed by myself), I will leave you in possession of Burstead House and the surrounding estate, and I will give you my word of honor that as long as you live and never presume to enter the House of Peers, I will to my utmost shield you from all the just and legal consequences of your crimes against your wife, against me, and against society. This is my offer. If you do not accept it before to-morrow night you shall be apprehended on a charge of felony. Do you accept the terms?"

"I—I d—do. Y—you a—are v—very generous."

"Then to-morrow, Arthur Petersham," I said, "Mr. Castleton and Dr. Clarges will call upon you with a deed which (as well as another document) the former gentleman has already caused to be prepared at my directions. Faithfully render to them an account of all your personal estate, and pay every farthing of it over to them as the trustees mentioned in the deed, and on *my honor*, which *you* have so outraged, you shall not (if I can protect you) be ever molested in

this world for your wrong-doings. But mind, one thing more; if you in any way fail to fulfill your part of this compact, woe upon you! If you reserve one item from the schedule of your personal effects, on the very day that I ascertain the fact of such dishonesty you will be criminally indicted. And if you ever again vote, or speak, or enter the House of Peers, my word of honor ceases to protect you."

"I—I a—am gr—grateful."

"One thing more, Arthur Petersham. You had better not leave this house till you have my permission to do so."

"Wh—why, wh—why?"

"Because," I answered, "if you do, my spies will be on your track and subject you to indignity and grave risk."

"And now, Lord Byfield," I added, "ring the bell and order me a carriage, for I must return to Fulham."

He obeyed, ringing the bell, and afterward unbarring the library door, so as to afford admittance to the servant answering the summons.

In another five minutes I was on my way home, in the cool dawn of a summer's day, lying back in Lord Byfield's carriage, to which he had handed me with countless expressions of obsequiousness and gratitude.

The feature of the man's conduct which struck me most forcibly was his manifestation of a craven fear of exposure. To lose the estimation of that society which he had so outraged, to be spoken of with scorn by that society for which he had ever expressed a lofty contempt, to be deprived of that rank which he had always professed to regard only as a toy, were anticipations so overwhelmingly horrible that the loss of his coveted millions by one fell stroke was comparatively a light misfortune. On my road to Fulham, reflecting on all the circumstances of my interview with my betrayer, I was well pleased with the recollection of this exhibition of cowardice on the part of one in whom moral dignity and principle had no place. Before entering Petersham House I had said to myself, "I am now going to drive this wicked man to extremities. What if, rendered desperate by the position into which I am going to force him, he should snap his fingers in contempt at the opinion of English society, and fly to the Continent ere I can set in action the legal forces necessary for his capture and indictment?" For that contingency I was not altogether unprepared, though the secrecy which it was my grand object to maintain, alike as to my wrong, his crime, and my measures of retribution, had necessitated me to adopt a line of action which would have found me in certain respects sorely at a loss how to proceed, if, deriding the menace of exposure, the wicked man had gone straight off to the sea-coast and fled in his yacht to a foreign country, where he would have been secure from the reach of British laws, and whither he could have drawn after him the greater part of his wealth. But fortunately "exposure" and social "degradation" were the two punishments which of all others he dreaded.

I had him therefore securely in my grasp, and without uneasiness could leave him unwatched.

The Lord had delivered my enemy into mine hands!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CLOSING OF "PETERSHAM AND BLAKE."

DURING the next month there were strange rumors in the aristocratic circles of English society, consternation in "the city" of London, and perplexity in the monetary cliques of foreign capitals. At a time when it had never stood higher in the estimation of the world, and had never enjoyed greater prosperity, the house of "Petersham and Blake of London, Paris, and Hamburg," had suddenly and most mysteriously ceased to exist. No one could account for it. The mighty house, which had been reared by generations of Petershams, was gone; and Lord Byfield (the last of the long line of Petershams), instead of appearing before the world and explaining the considerations which had induced him, without notice, to desert negotiations just entered upon, and relinquish undertakings just approaching triumphant consummation, was understood to be living in strict seclusion at Burstead House, in Hampshire. What was the cause which had led to this sudden rupture of commercial connections, old and new?—this sudden closing of vast and complicated engagements? It was neither poverty nor the discouragement of a season of unlucky speculation. For the wealth of the house was known to be prodigious, and for years past every thing the house had touched in the way of business had turned out a source of rich revenue. Moreover, the two partners whom Lord Byfield had taken into his banking-house since his father's death, far from being broken men, were already, with the fullest confidence of the commercial world, carrying on business under their own names—"Blades and Anderson." What had these gentlemen to say of Lord Byfield's conduct? How could they account for Lord Byfield's course in suddenly withdrawing himself from monetary circles, and removing from the list of the great banking-houses of London the honored firm of "Petersham and Blake?" They could give no explanation whatever. All they could say was that "Lord Byfield had a right to please himself." Their connection with him had been one of business, and very profitable business! They had never troubled themselves with his lordship's private affairs; nor had the public any right to be curious about them; for, however mysterious his lordship's sudden retirement from business might be, all his engagements with the public would be honorably fulfilled.

So the world talked on, and gossiped on, and wondered on, till it was tired. But at the close of two years society had almost forgotten that such a person as Lord Byfield ever lived, when a column in the principal daily papers announced the death of that eminent and highly-respected nobleman, and gave a sketch of his career—his early education and university honors, his enthusiastic devotion to the science and art of banking, his political engagements, his advancement to the peerage, and his steady perseverance in commercial undertakings subsequent to his elevation. Overtasked energies, resulting in total nervous prostration, closely bordering on mental disease, had compelled the noble lord's sudden retirement from business just two years since. In the hope that perfect rest would enable him to recover his shattered powers, Lord Byfield

had by one stroke of his pen put an end to his ancestral relations with the monetary world of Europe, and had retired to Burstead House in Hampshire, in which retreat he eventually succumbed before the advances of his malady. In the year 18—Lord Petersham had married Olive, the sole daughter and wealthy heiress of Matthew Blake, Esquire, the partner in the house of "Petersham and Blake;" but that marriage had resulted in no surviving issue. The disposition which the noble lord had made of his property could not of course be known at present; but as he left no heir to inherit his title, in all probability the legacies left out of his enormous property would be numerous. Of course the title of Baron Byfield was extinct.—Thus far the papers.

There was fresh amazement when it was discovered that, instead of leaving vast wealth behind him, Lord Byfield's possessions had ere the time of his death been reduced to the Burstead House estate, the rental of which was hardly £5000 per annum. Nor was the amazement lessened by the fact that this estate was left entirely and without limitation of any kind to "Olive, the daughter of Matthew Blake, Esquire, formerly of the house of Petersham and Blake, and of Fulham Villa, in the county of Middlesex."

By this legacy, which was on his part perfectly voluntary, Lord Byfield endeavored to render a tardy and inadequate atonement to his friend's daughter for the cruel wrong he had done her.

My promise to Lord Byfield was to preserve his secret so long as he should live. His death left me free to complete my undertaking, and clear the name and fame of Etty and her son in the eyes of the world as well as of their private friends. My task, of course, was not left unfinished.

CHAPTER XIV.

FAREWELL.

A FEW particulars yet remain to be told that may enable the reader to collect the threads of the strange story narrated in the foregoing pages.

In "Part the Fourth of Miss Tabitha Tree's Note-Book," it is told or shadowed forth how I, under my name of Grace Temple, kept Mrs. Gower under my surveillance; how, as the time approached, when I saw I could restore her sister to her with an unsullied reputation, I revealed the fact of Arthur Williams's birth to Julian Gower; how I induced Julian Gower (having first bound him to maintain a temporary reserve of the truth from his wife) to introduce the boy to "The Cedars," and how, soon after the boy's return to Blackheath, on the termination of the Mid-summer holidays, I took Mrs. Gower with me to Fulham Villa (she being still ignorant of my real name and character), and enabled her to witness the first meeting of Julian and Etty after nearly seventeen years of separation, and nearly fifteen years after her flight from Laughton. It is also told how, when I asked her, if she still believed in her husband's steadfast love, the noble little creature, even in her agony of doubt, exclaimed, "He is unutterably, unalterably good!"

It may be asked *why* I gave that gentle, Christian woman needless pain? Reader, have you

never known the pleasure of trying the utmost speed of a horse—the utmost to which you may bend the little firm steel of a fencing foil—the utmost to which you may tax your own powers of endurance—the utmost at which you may rate the excellence of any thing that you cordially admire? Even as you have made such trials as these, so did I make trial of Tibby's love and confidence in her grand, heroic husband. I *gloried* in them! I *knew* they would endure any thing, and I wished to justify my conviction, so that I might yet the more believe in the great articles of my life's creed—the possibility of the loftiest conceivable ideal of human life being carried out in this actual world. I knew that I could do no harm to such a woman as Tibby—that it was impossible in any way whatever to demoralize her. I was as sure of it as that I walked and breathed, and took notes of man's and nature's works. I knew, too, that just in proportion to the sharpness of the preceding trial would be the gladness of the triumph in which that trial was to close.

Such is my apology.

Let me say something more of Tibby, which all who have made her acquaintance in these pages will be glad to hear. God granted her desire! Within a twelvemonth of the day in

which she locked her sister Etty in her embrace (covering her with kisses and tears of love) she presented Julian with a daughter, and when the year came round again she presented him with a son. And verily those children are "like as arrows in the hand of a giant!"

On the first anniversary of "little Julian's" birthday I dined at "The Cedars" with Mrs. Petersham (I need not say that Etty never used the title of Lady Byfield), her splendid boy Arthur (foremost just then among the gallant lads of Harrow), Mr. and Mrs. Gurley of Loughton, Dr. Clarges, and Mr. Castleton.

Our host and hostess, as usual, made me feel that I was an especial object of their love.

"Oh, Tibby," I said after dinner, as we ladies were in the drawing-room, and Mrs. Gower had her beautiful children in her arms, almost buried under them, "how gloriously happy you seem now! In the long-run, good fortune *does* come to those who deserve it."

"My happiness," answered Tibby, putting her little girl down and raising herself on her sofa to look at me, "is your work. Yes, dear Olive, by God's assistance you did that, without which it could never have been complete. Yes, dear *Olive Blake*, my great and perfect happiness is a consequence of your *Good Work*."

BOOK IX.

BEING A LETTER, WRITTEN ON OCTOBER THE —TH, 1861, AS
A POSTSCRIPT TO THE FOREGOING EIGHT BOOKS.—BY AN-
NETTE PETERSHAM.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE COTTAGE, LAUGHTON, *October*, 1861.

Soon after the last of the occurrences narrated in the preceding pages, my dear sister, and her husband, and my beloved friend Olive Blake, at *my request* wrote the *eight books* which contain the sad story of my wickedness in early life, and the suffering it drew—not only on myself, but on all I hold most dear to my heart. At the time the *eight books* were penned at *my request* they were intended for publication; for in all humility I deemed that the plain narrative of my sin and its punishment might deter foolish girls from treading upon the edge of error, and so might be serviceable in the cause of morality.

When, however, *the books* were written, my dear sister had an invincible repugnance to the thought of their publication. She did not state her motives, but it was easy for me to discern and appreciate them. Her deep affection for me, and the genuine modesty of her unobtrusive piety, were reasons which made her wish that the deeds of her rare goodness and my utter unworthiness should not be permanently recorded. We discussed the question of publication frequently, and finally she consented that they should be published after her death.

At the close of last year my dear sister (after having seen her son and daughter grow up to imitate the goodness of their parents) died at

"The Cedars," Highgate, leaving to her husband, and to all who came within the circle of her influence, the edifying memory of her virtues. She was interred in Highgate Cemetery, near the spot where the memorial she erected in love of her erring sister still stands. On leaving her grave I was resolved to publish *the books* forthwith, deeming that their publication would be the best tribute of respect and affection I could pay to her.

The alterations made in the memoirs, as they were left by their writers, are for the chief part those of date (which have been introduced to make the entire story read as if it were written in the present year). Certain additions have also been made to my dear sister's books by Mr. Jeaffreson, at my request and sometimes at my dictation. My dear sister had failed to paint my misconduct, and her sufferings and labors, in sufficiently strong and vivid terms. Mr. Jeaffreson and I have therefore (with the approval of my dear son) endeavored to supply the deficiencies of her manuscript.

If it should be deemed by any readers that the foregoing pages do not condemn my evil behavior with sufficient severity, I beg them to know that my conscience does without ceasing that which tender love of me prevented my dear sister, and Julian Gower, and Olive Blake from doing.

ANNETTE PETERSHAM.

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